

THE CHILD'S WORLD

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THE CHILD'S WORLD



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INTRODUCTION

What this book is about

IT MUST surely be reckoned one of the glories of our time, that in an age which has seen so much destruction, the nation's care for its children has reached a degree unknown before in history. Research and learning have gone together to discover the basic needs for the healthy development of the child from before his birth to the end of school life, and public services are in action to supply those needs. They watch over him in sickness, maintain him in health, and give especial care to the handicapped children—those with physical and mental defect, the maladjusted, the delinquent and the deprived.

Never before has there been such grim searching-out of cases of cruelty to children, or such efforts to repair the wrong done to them. No one would be complacent about this progress, or pretend that we are doing all that could be done; but we have done much, and have transformed for the better the world of the child from what it was a mere fifty years ago.

Accompanying and guiding the advance in the physical care of our children and often preceding it, has been our concern for their mental health. Few people nowadays believe that what a young delinquent really needs is sound punishment, and fewer still that the most efficiently run institution can provide a home for the abandoned child. It is widespread knowledge to-day that every child requires more than good food,

warm clothing and regular sleep to rear him successfully. Increasingly large numbers of people are being convinced that he needs more than discipline and training to help him develop into a mature individual.

We have progressed so far indeed in our care of children, that it would seem the time has come when we might reap the fruits of our endeavours and sit back a while and enjoy them, and let them enjoy us. But for most of us, this seems a far harder thing than carrying out modern methods of child care. We enjoy dressing them nicely and wheeling them out in prams, watching them entertain a room full of relatives with their nursery rhymes and first dancing steps. We glow when they say something clever, or surpass other children in skills of various sorts. But none of this is enjoying the child for what he is himself, in the same way as we enjoy our friends for the particular view of life each one reflects.

What we have to do now as the next step in our advance in child welfare, is to learn to enjoy our children for their own sakes, to ensure as far as we can that their environment is such that they can reflect life as they see it, undistorted by our prejudices and our limitations. No longer are we content to-day to be the lawgiver and judge over them but rather someone who travels along with them, but whose view of life is a kaleidoscope of richer colour and pattern than they, because of their immaturity, could conceive. The time has come for us to spill our riches before them, and in return to gather up the unspoiled freshness of their vision. This is the fullness of any adult-child relationship, an interchange of experience in which each draws something of inspiration from the other.

But the degree of enjoyment we get from anything depends first, on the extent of our understanding of it. We may love music, but our enjoyment of it increases enormously when we understand something of the orchestra or the construction of the musical work we are hearing. The same is true of architecture or poetry or any other of the arts, and certainly we can only enjoy our children when we understand something of them. Difficult behaviour may not be less difficult to handle when we understand what prompts it, but it becomes more meaningful and therefore we shall deal with it more calmly and probably more successfully. We shall realize that it is not motivated by 'pure cussedness' or 'sheer naughtiness',—meaningless terms which reveal our own inability to understand what is happening—and the chances are that we shall be likely to solve the difficulty because we know why it has arisen.

Secondly, enjoyment depends on a relaxed state of mind, a tranquillity of spirit in which we are receptive to new impressions, and as our understanding of our children grows, so will our ability to relax when we are with them and to be more sensitive to their reactions. It is only in this tranquil frame of mind that we can delight in their philosophy so alien to our own, bear with their vagaries, and remain confident in the face of normal anti-social behaviour so often reprehensible by adult standards. This does not mean we shall necessarily remain unmoved, murmuring, 'He'll grow out of it'; it does mean we shall be so much attuned to our child that we shall know when to intervene and how to guide.

Our enjoyment of our children then, depends largely on our understanding of them, and their enjoyment of us on our relaxed attitude to them. We shall delight in

them, not because we find them funny, or cute, or intelligent, or 'just like me', but because each day in ways unexpected or trivial, they reveal the darting brightness of new life. They in turn, we hope, will delight in us, because in our sunshine they can unfold and feel free to reach out for more life.

It is with these thoughts in mind that the present book has been assembled, based mainly on articles published in *The Nursery World* during the last three years, which seek to present to the adult the world as the child sees it, and from this to determine what our attitudes to him should be. Once we have seen through his eyes, we are then in a position to help him bring his view of life into focus with our own, and to make his adjustment to the world harmonious and fruitful.

We may think of the child's world perhaps as of three concentric spheres. The innermost circle is the world of the child himself; beyond this, the world of his immediate environment, and outside this the 'real' world in which in due course he must live and move and have his being.

The book is divided into three sections each dealing with one of these worlds. Logically and ideally, we should begin perhaps by spotlighting the innermost first—the world within the child, examining his mental attitudes and his behaviour patterns, and from this going on to survey his first contacts with people in and around his home and noticing how these change as he grows older. Finally, we should then be able to consider him as a social being in our culture.

But in fact, the vast majority of us are not primarily concerned with what the child is feeling and thinking. What troubles us is how well or badly he is fitting in with our mode of life and our pre-conceived ideas of

how he should behave. Many of us indeed, are prepared to waive 'good behaviour' in the home, so long as he does not disgrace us outside! Even his relationship with us is therefore often a secondary consideration, and only as a last resort and perhaps never, are we really interested in the child as an individual in his own right.

The present book takes account of this customary approach and follows it, in the hope that the reader who has explored the world outside with the child, will be bold enough to adventure into the home we think we know so well with him, and thence into the secret places of his heart and mind.

The first section then, *The Child in the World* treats of such formidable topics as discipline, punishment, rudeness, co-operation and the like, topics which centre round controversial themes bothering endlessly endless numbers of parents, teachers, welfare workers and so on who seek to mould the child into the good citizen. The second, *The Child in the Home* sees him in close-up, *vis-à-vis* his mother, father and relations, as a toddler, a youngster and an adolescent. The third, *The Child in Himself* treats of his fear, his jealousy, his shyness, his attitudes to the daily problem of living, and tries to show not only why a child behaves in such a way, but why such behaviour is right for him.

The book makes no claim to be complete or exhaustive, nor does it pretend to supply every answer to every problem. There can be no end to the study of children, for the development of personality which begins with birth, never ends. In one sense, there can be no right answers, because every answer will depend on the individual child and on the adult who is engaged with him at the moment. It will have served its purpose if it

has revealed first, that there is an answer, has suggested what that answer may be, and has given the reader the courage and interest to work his own out for himself.

PART I

The Child in the World

How best can we help our children to fit in with the world we know, and how long will it take? And incidentally, what do they think of this world of ours and of our endeavours to guide them?

CHAPTER ONE

No Growing Pains

What kind of discipline, and how much?

THE BELIEF of our grandparents that children were to be seen but not heard, and all the rigid discipline that was necessary to make it effective, has been swept away by our generation. To-day, children's voices are shrill everywhere. In buses, trains, restaurants, exhibitions they are raised, asking questions, proffering opinions, contradicting, arguing, and there are many adults who, hearing them, wonder whether we have not gone too far in the other direction. There are ominous murmurs that we should restrict our children more, and nostalgic references to the politeness and respect supposedly characteristic of the Victorian child.

The question of how much discipline children need is as old as the hills, and is earnestly debated from generation to generation. Every thoughtful parent considers the question if not before the baby comes, then certainly while he is helpless and adorable in his crib. 'I'm not going to spoil him,' says one. 'I'll never be a doormat,' affirms another.

But there are others, equally high-minded, who are bolder. 'He's going to do whatever he wants because he's all I've got,' or, 'I had such a miserable childhood myself. He shan't.'

A good many of these decisions however, are modified when it comes to putting them into practice. Two

years later, the doting parents come sadly to the conclusion that the adorable, helpless infant needs firm handling. The rebel against maternal slavery dances attendance on her young tyrants day and night. The mother who was going to give all, gives instead a rain of prohibitions and even now and then, a good smack.

For to a great extent, it is the temperament of the parent which determines what form her discipline shall take. She may find to her dismay that she 'just hasn't the patience' and her good resolutions may be swept by the board. Or she may have to confess that she simply cannot bear to see her child upset and therefore gives in to him more than she meant to.

Again, the temperament of the individual child largely influences adult reaction. A mother will say, 'I've tried reasoning with him. It doesn't work—but he understands a slap.' Another will find that a quiet word is effective with one of her brood and not with another.

So the question of discipline is bound to recur, simply because it is one to which there is no final solution. There is however one judgment about it which is incontrovertible and yet which is all too often ignored. It is this. Too strict a discipline is as bad as too lenient a one, but neither of these is as detrimental to the child as a discipline which is alternately lenient and strict.

The child who grows up under a rigid rule, will, as an adult, be inhibited and unable to live a full life. The child who is too much indulged will grow into the egocentric adult who knows no consideration for others. But either of these is better off than the one who is alternately pampered and restrained.

He is the unfortunate who never knows where he is—whose mother scouts the idea of regular pocket money,

but will on occasion pass him five shillings as a treat, or equally refuse him threepence for an ice-cream. His is the father who gives him a cuff one evening because he is standing on the newspaper, but who another time will help him fold it into a cocked hat. He knows scoldings and caresses, reproofs and praise, rewards and threats, all within the space of an hour.

He is unfortunate, not because he is badly treated. Indeed, in the long run, he may appear to come off rather well because the good spells are extra good to make up for the bad moments. But this occasional indulgence can never cancel out the increase of anxiety which such children inevitably suffer.

They live in a world which knows no rules. The child of an indulgent parent knows for certain that he can always 'get round', and the child of the strict parent knows that he never will. But the child of the erratic parent knows nothing.

He must wait to see first, what is the mood of the moment, then to calculate his chances of bending this to his will. He's bottom of the form. Will this mean a whacking, or will it be a good joke to be recounted at the family party? It may easily be either. No one knows.

It follows that such a child has a poor chance of developing into a stable individual. This anxiety, present from his earliest days, makes him tense, restless, on the watch for signs of weakening, and for danger signals. Dad has gone out slamming the door. Mother will be touchy. Best keep out of the way. Or again, Mother's gone to see grandma. Last time she came home she was in rare good humour. Perhaps now is the time to ask for a kite?

His own character development suffers too. Having

no example of self-control, patience or forbearance before him, he expresses every vagrant thought. He wants something and asks for it, is refused, wheedles, whines, rages and characteristically 'cannot take "No" for an answer' simply because 'No' is never a final answer in his home.

We owe it to our children to be as consistent in our dealings with them as possible, to build up in their minds an easily recognizable picture of us. 'Does your Mummy let you do that?' asks a four-year-old. 'Minc doesn't.' 'My Mummy *always* lets me', 'My Daddy *never* allows me',—this is the world the child wants for the first few years of his life—a world mapped for him, obeying laws that he can understand.

Only very gradually can he enjoy alternatives and manage the responsibility of deciding for himself. 'Mummy will be cross when she knows I've lost my hair-ribbon'—this is a sobering thought, but it is easier to bear than, 'I wonder what Mummy will say?' or, 'Will she be cross this time or say it doesn't matter?'

It is true of course, that every adult at one time may permit and at another must forbid, but this is a very different thing from erratically ruling a child's activities for no better reason than, 'because I say so' or 'because you can't' or 'because I can't be bothered.'

It is for this reason that it is wise, and indeed only fair to give a child an explanation of our decisions in terms that he can understand. 'I don't want you to have an ice-cream that isn't wrapped because——' will be accepted, if grudgingly, by the child. It makes our behaviour at least comprehensible to him. He may think we are unnecessarily finicky, but at any rate we are actuated by some kind of reason and not by an inexplicable whim. Moreover, he will as he grows older and

learns more about us, be able to apply what he knows to other and similar situations.

'It's no use asking her. I know she won't,' may be regretful, but it is at least certain knowledge and the child knows where he stands and is freed from the misery of thinking *perhaps* if he did so-and-so, she *might* change her mind.

This policy of explaining why we do this and not that may be called pandering to the child, but in fact, in following it we pay our children the tribute of treating them as thinking creatures.

The child who pleads so woefully for a change of judgment,—'Can't I? Just this once? If I never ask again? Just a tiny, weeny piece?' is more than half disappointed when he wins the day, when at last he wrings the impatient, 'Oh, all right then!' He has gained something—but he has lost far more—the reassurance of a parent or nurse or teacher who can be *trusted* to remain firm. He tests a plank as it were, by repeated assault, and if it lets him down, he will take care not to trust it as much in the future.

If then the first rule of discipline is to be consistent, the next point to be considered is, how far we are justified in imposing it on them at all, and what kind is justifiable.

War is constantly waged on this front between progressives of the so-called 'free discipline' school, and the back-to-the-wall adherents of the 'children should be seen and not heard' doctrine. Supporters of the former movement mutter warnings of repressions, inhibitions and complexes, while the others shudder at stories of mobs of uncontrolled hooligans who openly call parents and teachers by names far from Christian.

The most logical way of deciding the question however, is to consider at the outset why the problem of discipline should arise at all—or better phrased, why it should be necessary for the adult to guide the child in his development towards maturity. And here the starting-point is a fact at once so obvious, so much taken for granted, that it is almost always ignored. This one fundamental fact which every adult knows and very few ponder, is that the child's point of view and the adult's are diametrically opposed.

The child's life is governed by one supreme consideration, 'What *I* want now.' He is playing and the clock strikes on deaf ears. He is hungry: food is in the larder to be eaten. He doesn't like the loud-voiced neighbour: very well, he proclaims it to her and the housetops. He wants his mother: she may be busy, ill, tired, but he screams till she comes.

The adult has had to learn that in fact this motto, 'What *I* want now', doesn't work. He has been forced to replace it by the sadder, if wiser, 'What must be' or he finds himself on the wrong side of law and society. He wants to buy a house, but must postpone purchase. He is tired, but must stay to finish the day's quota of work. He loathes a colleague, but learns to work loyally with him.

The two worlds, the child's and the adult's are thus far apart, and it is the adult's difficult task to bring about in the child's mind a change of front so that he comes to accept the adult view and can thereby live out successfully his own adult life. The adult must persuade the child to give up what Freud called 'the pleasure principle' and substitute for it 'the reality principle' which governs adult life.

If we realize this, we shall understand that the bridg-

ing of the gulf between these two philosophies is a colossal achievement. It is no small rift which divides them, and it is evident that it is an achievement which can only come about through years of gradual change.

If smacking is to be the way to hurry the child through the process, there must be many smacks. If nagging, there must be many days of saying the same things over and over again. If patience and understanding are to be the rule, we must be prepared to show angelic patience and understanding.

'You did hang up your coat nicely to-day.'

'Yes, I knew you'd be pleased,' says Four Years rather smugly. But to-morrow the coat is tied on to a string and flung on to the floor to make an anchor. No matter. 'The wheels have begun to turn. They stop sometimes and start again, but the day will come at long last, and then he will want a coat-hanger too!

Many adults find it difficult to accept the inevitable slowness of the change, and many more fail to appreciate how big in the child's mind are the little things we ask him to do. Be quick! Be clean! Be quiet! Be polite! Be kind! Don't snatch! Ask nicely! These commonplaces that we become so sick of saying, are modes of thought and conduct alien to the child's nature. No wonder he takes time to absorb them, to make them his own and then to act on them!

It should surely however, be the aim of every thoughtful parent to make the child's journey from his world to the adult's more of a joyous pilgrimage than the penance it often is. And like most journeys, this one may be travelled the more quickly in pleasant company.

Many parents proved for themselves long before psychology taught it, that it is the child's love for the

adults in his environment which tempts him in the first place to exchange his philosophy for theirs. 'Just pick up your toys before we go out, will you?' is more effective than 'You must learn to be tidy!' because the emotion behind the first speaks to the child's affection for the one who asks, while the second drives it underground. The first takes friendliness for granted, just as the second assumes hostility.

Every adult knows that it is easy to do things for a person who is loved—more, that we want to do something for the loved one. Far too many adults put themselves voluntarily into the category of the critic and the commander in their dealings with children. 'I won't have it.' 'You've got to learn to do what I want!' 'You shall not behave like that!'

These attitudes bring out a tenacity in the child to his own way of life which makes the adult despair. 'He's so obstinate, you wouldn't believe! If I tell him to do something, he just goes and does the opposite. Sheer cussedness, that's what it is!'

Yet the approval of the loved person, the occasional 'That's fine!' 'What lovely clean hands!' is a reward which no child can resist. This tone disperses sulks as effectively as the other gathers them. What is more, the child comes to regard these new modes of behaviour as desirable because the loved one approves of them, and he is encouraged to replace his original reactions by them. It is then we pay him the tribute of saying that he is 'learning to behave' and 'improving lately'!

The value of love in this education, however, goes deeper than this. The child learns not only more quickly: what is far more important, he learns willingly. Whatever changes are made in his viewpoint, are made with his full consent. He takes over the reality principle

voluntarily, if in small stages. He wants to do these things, and shows distress if he fails. 'I did try, Mummy.' 'I'm sorry I couldn't do it.'

These sentiments express the extent of his disappointment in himself, and here we have reached a most important stage in his development. The new rules of life are becoming his own, they form part of his philosophy, and will not be rejected as soon as the original influence has gone.

Many parents are distressed when the child 'forgets' his table manners as soon as he stays to school dinner, when he 'copies' the rough behaviour of cruder companions. What has happened in fact, is that the table manners, the refined speech, were never wholeheartedly accepted by the child. They were assumed for a time to please the adult, and rejected when others offer him new standards of conduct, perhaps more amusing or more vigorous. But if the parent is consistent in the expression of what he considers desirable, the deeper regard which the child feels for him will in time outweigh these temporary lapses.

There will then be no backsliding in the future if the child is allowed to make his adjustment at his own pace and in his own way. We are all familiar with the youth who, leaving home for the first time, reverts to behaviour which he dared not express when he was under the family tree. If parental demands are too swift and too stringent, he quickly gives up the pleasure principle as a child, and pays lip-service to reality. He changes his linen, is punctual in his work, and remembers to raise his hat and wipe his feet.

But a month of freedom, and the pleasures he has never willingly abandoned come into their own again. He stands out among the boys as the life and soul of

the party. It is he who will tip off the policeman's helmet, whose money burns a hole in his pocket, and who finds something wrong with every new job. He is in fact applying the child's view of life to adult circumstances.

If however in the nursery years we succeed in helping our children through their love for us to accept our way of life, we shall soon find that we have given their behaviour a momentum which will carry them forward. Our boy will learn to stop his game himself in time so that he can meet daddy at the station, to reject the temptation of buying fireworks in favour of the trains he has set his heart on, to fall down dead when he's shot if he wants to be admitted as one of the cow-boy gang. He will learn in fact, that the tiresome, pettifogging restrictions of adult life have grown up and are reasonable because they make for the ultimate welfare of all.

He accepts what we say at first, doubtfully. 'I will if you want me to.' 'All right, if you say so.' But as time goes on, this acquiescence for our sakes becomes a part of himself, a part of the ideal self, the self he would like to be.

As we know, adolescence sees the full flowering of this self-consciousness. It is then when the child is passing over into the adult world that self-discipline becomes active. It is then that the child shows markedly that he feels responsible for himself. 'I do wish I hadn't said that.' 'It was awful of me to cut Mrs. Blank in the street, just because she looks shabby and I was with the girls from school.' 'I won't ever sit about with my hair in curlers again. I felt dreadful when Daddy brought some friends in.'

This is the only true and worthwhile discipline, that

which comes from within, from the self. This only is effective because it is a constant standard against which the child can measure his actions. Its development as we have seen, takes time, and like all good things is slow to mature.

CHAPTER TWO

The Need for Punishment

Is it really necessary, and who is it for?

HARD ON the heels of the question of discipline comes punishment—in fact, earnest parents often think of it first of all, before the general problem of guiding children. They discuss with others the most effective methods in use, when to employ them and how severely. It is one of the few topics on which the young parent is prepared to seek advice and take it from older people who have brought up children. ‘How did you manage?’ they will ask. ‘How did you make him do this, or not do that?’

People who do worry in this way are usually neither callous nor unthinking. They may spank and suffer remorse because they have been so hard, or not spank and suffer remorse because they have been so weak, but at least they do not belong to the ‘Give him a good slap and think no more about it’ faction.

They are not likely to cuff their children heartily in a moment of ill-humour, or threaten them outrageously, or snatch from them some little treasure in revenge. They are far more likely to develop an ominous, ‘Johnny, you know what you’ll get if you go on doing that’ and to proceed inflexibly with execution more in sorrow than in anger.

There are perhaps two things to be said for a definite mode of punishment in the house. At least the child

knows what to expect, and he may be half-way upstairs to bed without being told, if that is a recognized punishment in his house, when he knows he has offended. He is never the victim of hasty decisions or obscure warnings to 'wait and see'. And once the sentence is carried out, he knows the matter is settled. Neither he, nor the parent will feel the grudging need to rake up the incident again.

These are, however, slight advantages. The essential mistake that is made in any discussion on the 'right' way to punish would seem to be in the initial assumption that punishment is necessary.

The majority of people take this fact for granted. Of course children need to be corrected, and to be guided in the paths we adults have decided are the right ones! From the beginning of time it has been laid down that it is the *duty* of adults to train children in the way they should go.

This may be true, but it by no means follows that this training can only come about by punishment.

If we consider first of all which are the childish crimes most frequently punished, we shall find they are those where the child flouts adult authority—'wilful disobedience' is the usual term. He has been told not to throw things in the fire, not to answer back, not to touch the television set, and he does it. He is punished to teach him not to do these things.

But is punishment really effective in such cases? Many parents will maintain that it is. The child appears to have learned his lesson, but in far too many cases he has merely learned to become more cautious in carrying out these forbidden things. He chooses his opportunity more carefully and isn't caught. He doesn't answer back certainly, but he sulks, or hums under his breath, or turns a deaf ear.

'I have told you repeatedly I will not have this sort of behaviour,' storms the mother, administering justice. The very word 'repeatedly' shows how ineffective her punishments have been in reality.

There is another way of looking at it. A child is punished 'for his own good'. Playing in the street, playing with fire, are dangerous for him and for others. But if careful explanation when he is in a quiet mood as to why he must not run into the road have failed to check him, will a thrashing administered when he and his mother are upset and angry be effective when, in the excitement of a game, a playfellow chases him off the pavement?

Until the child is mature enough to be responsible for his own road safety, we must be responsible for him. Games in the street must simply be taboo; effective fireguards must take care of the child who is too young to take care of himself.

It is better still to approach the matter constructively—to train the toddler to halt at every kerbside, so that by the time he can play games, he would as soon think of jumping into a stream as run into the road.

In the same way we should teach a child to do dangerous things safely, rather than forbid him to do them, and so hedge him about with temptations. A three year old child can be taught to light the fire, to cut with a sharp knife as he can be taught to use a spoon—and with no more danger. He can learn to strike the match away from him, to see where his fingers are when he cuts and so on, and to carry out these tasks perfectly competently.

We shall of course supervise these activities, but in permitting them, we shall not only have helped our children to become more skilled but also have re-

moved from them the misery of living in a world full of dangerous things that pinch or burn or sting or cut or hurt—or even worse, a world hung round with innumerable notices, ‘Do not touch!’

What is far more important to the adult than his learning to do these things, however, is that he no longer needs to do them surreptitiously, and therefore to be disobedient. The child who is lifted up now and again to finger deliberately the wax fruits under grandma’s glass shade, will never be caught clambering up to do so when she is not there.

Indeed, if we take as our criterion that we only punish for disobedience, then if we examine our children’s peccadilloes carefully, we shall find that the majority of them are prompted by curiosity, fearlessness, great physical energy, a sense of fun and so on—qualities which on the whole please rather than annoy, and which we would want to preserve. They must be controlled certainly, but they are scarcely good reasons for punishment.

This fact lies so near the surface, that we are now faced with a more serious consideration. The parent it seems does not really punish for disobedience. ‘I know he didn’t mean to do it,’ the mother will say on reflection. ‘He’s not really naughty—just mischievous.’ Frequently these observations end up, ‘—but he makes me so mad,’ and this is indeed, getting near the truth.

Children are more frequently punished because the parent is outraged, and it is in fact not the child who needs to be punished, but the adult who *needs to punish*. As one mother said, ‘Directly I’ve slapped him, I feel better. It does me good, somehow.’

These are shocking words when we read them in

black and white, and yet they are frank and show real insight into the nature of punishment. A busy day, a hundred jobs waiting to be done, and a tiresome child who won't listen to reason, and the scene is set: a sharp slap, a burst of tears from the child and sudden overwhelming victory for the mother. Her own exasperation has found expression, and as the incident usually closes with the child's acquiescence, she feels appeased.

But let us admit that it is the mother who is satisfied. The benefit to the child is far more doubtful. He may have learned that his mother is touchy, liable to inexplicable moods, that she hurts when she slaps and frightens him when she is cross, and on top of all this, that he is a bad boy. He may be more wary in future, more ready to give in and less bold to provoke while he is little. But are these in fact the things we want to teach?

If we can admit so much, we may go further. Perhaps we punish because we are afraid—afraid that our children are getting out of hand, that we shan't be able to manage them, that our mother-in-law will think we are giving way to them, so we go further than we meant to. We spring up and give them a good shaking, '*Now* will you do what you're told!'

It is easy to understand that when we are not sure of our ability to deal with a situation, we work ourselves up into a state of fury to brave it. If we need to have an argument about the number of rationed eggs we have had compared with a neighbour, we set out for the grocer with our bristles rising. It is the only way we can summon courage to tackle the assistant.

In the same way anger may bolster up our confidence to deal with our difficult children. We see a vision of years of growing rebellion ahead of us, and we think it is now or never. But if we are sure of ourselves, we shall

handle the situation much less aggressively. Good humour, and a sense of humour go a long way towards breaking down a child's defences, and a storm of tears can end in a gale of laughter.

'Let's make the train go down the tunnel,' we say, to help along the weary repetition of putting arms in coat sleeves and legs in trousers. We turn a blind eye to misbehaviour that clamours for a reprimand, and are not above walking out of a room to cool down instead of accepting a child's challenge to fight this thing to a finish. We are able to speak equably even when we are annoyed, and to meet a child's blank refusal with, 'No, I don't expect you want to just now, but I'll go and get my shopping basket, and then you may have changed your mind.'

We prefer suggestion to injunction. 'Let's see if you can take your coat off before me . . . Let's be quick and we may see the steam-roller at work.' Such methods may be described variously as coaxing, wheedling, giving way, bribing. They are in fact, maturer ways of handling such situations than the panicky working of one's self up to get the better of a child, because they rely on mature qualities of forbearance, discretion and good sense.

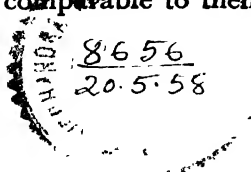
It is obvious that the need to punish because of the fear of proving weak, is closely linked with the desire to experience power. This again is not a pleasant fact, but it is especially clearly seen when children misbehave in the presence of other people. Many parents who are usually mild in their attitude to their children, develop an unaccustomed asperity when other people are watching, as for example in restaurants, public vehicles or parks. 'Will you keep your elbows off the table! . . . Don't fidget! . . . Remember where you

are!' All too frequently when these reprimands are not heeded—as is usually the case for they are exhibited for the occasion and are not part of the child's normal training—sharp punishment will be given, and with it an instinctive look from the adult for some expression of public approval. 'You see, I'm not one of these soft mothers!'

It is not going too far to say that this power is relished by many adults who are far from being hard-hearted. 'He was absolutely heart-broken—sobbed for hours!' They assume the child's grief is a measure of his repentance instead of what it actually is—a proof of his unhappiness towards them, his bitterness, his frustration, his guilty feelings that will seek solace in one form or another.

Punishment, it is clear, is not a simple question of deciding when, and how and how much. It is subtly linked with adult motives some of which have been indicated and which lie deeply hidden in our own natures. It can be so often *my* need to express myself, my bad temper, my bitterness, my sense of inferiority at the expense of my child's confidence in me.

For this reason, it is worth cultivating towards our children from their earliest days, the generosity of the mature personality to the immature. We shall not give back to our children what they, because of their immaturity, give us. We shall not slap because they kick, nor give a sound good hiding that he won't forget in a hurry because we are twice as tall and ten times as strong. We shall try instead, to open avenues for young energies rather than shut doors against them. Above all we shall believe that we can best guide our children by the exercise of adult qualities rather than by a childishness comparable to their own.



CHAPTER THREE

Too Good to be True

Does goodness come from outside, or inside?

'HAS HE been good?' The question springs to most mothers' lips when they collect their children from a visit, or a party. So customary is it, that it has become almost a password on such occasions, and so has the reply, 'As good as gold.' We get into the habit of asking it, and we reply to it almost mechanically. We prepare our children well before hand: 'Mind you're good!' and when we are reassured by others as to the excellence of their behaviour, we feel undoubted satisfaction.

But what is this 'goodness' we are so anxious about? Well, we hope and trust that in the course of a three-hour visit, our child has not scratched the furniture, eaten too many biscuits, or trounced the little friend who invited him. In brief, we hope 'he has not been any trouble'.

These are praiseworthy considerations on our part, and they do much to preserve friendship between mothers. But if they are our only, or indeed, our chief concern, they imply a very low standard of children's behaviour. These social requirements of ours tend to clamp down on the children's free delight in play, their spontaneous reactions to each other, their enjoyment of different toys, a different background and different food. They set store on repressive qualities of cleanliness, tidiness, politeness, carefulness and general 'niceness'.

We have only to compare in our minds for a moment, the apologetic manner most of us assume when our children exhibit any qualities the reverse of these. 'Boys will be boys. . . . You know what children are. . . . It's only a phase . . . They get these moods.' So often phrases like these are uttered with the embarrassed half-laugh that reveals only too plainly that the speaker herself regards natural child-like behaviour as something to be eradicated in time, and the sooner the better.

But if we are wise, when our child is invariably praised for being 'as good as gold', when to our indulgent eyes his behaviour leaves nothing to be desired, we should pause before we allow the smile of the gratified mother to settle on our faces. We should remember that other, and timely proverbial saying, 'All is not gold that glitters.'

It is nice to know that the visit has been a happy one, and that Mrs. Blank will not say to herself as she closes the door on us, 'Never again!' But 'goodness' in excess, is not always a sign of wholesomeness in children—or in adults either, for that matter. It may be a sign of unhappy or undeveloped personality. A very obvious example is the apathy of the mentally backward infant, so strikingly in contrast to the normal baby who 'cannot be left alone for a minute'.

Among older children, however, there are some who show by their excessive goodness, clear indication that all is not well with them. One meets for example, the unhappy child who seems obsessed with fears of doing wrong, or even of seeing others do wrong. He laments because he has got some mud on his jacket, worries over giants who eat little children in his picture books and who may come after him, and as he plays with

others, utters dire warning. 'You're naughty' he will cry, as his robuster companions disappear on some escapade. 'You'll get into trouble!'

Such a child is often praised by adults and even held up as an example because he can be trusted and 'is no bother', and of course, it is a matter of self-congratulation when our children do remember our injunctions when we are not there. But a cheerful obedience, a wish to do what Mummy wants, is very different from a neurotic fear of doing anything wrong which is characteristic of the abnormally 'good' child. If we watch him more closely, we shall see that his goodness is rooted in unhealthy ground. He is good because he is consumed by fears. One of his very favourite remarks is, 'I'm not a naughty boy, am I?' and the frequency with which he asks it, shows how unsure he himself is of this fact.

Why is he so afraid, so scared of transgressing the adult law which every normal child should want to test for himself? It is not too much to say, that in nearly every case of this kind, the child will have grown up to understand that goodness is the price he must pay for parental affection—the one essential thing in his life.

He will have been reared in an atmosphere where 'That's naughty!' is utter condemnation, and where a standard of adult propriety is dangled constantly before his nose. We laugh at Victorian cautionary tales where boys who suck their thumbs, won't wash, fidget at table, laugh at others, don't look where they are going, who, in fact, do all the trivial things so annoying to adults are visited by dreadful retribution. Yet these are no more out-of-date, no more stupid and unfair to children than is a continual insistence on 'good' behaviour.

It must be obvious even to the casual observer, how much of the joy of life such children lose. It is well known too, that in spite of the claim of trustworthiness which is made for them they are in fact, quick to take advantage if they are sure their misdemeanours will not be found out. What is not so obvious, but is much more serious, is the dreadful burden of undeserved guilt they are forced to carry about with them. Far too many of these children lock away in their hearts the dreadful skeleton: 'Mummy doesn't love naughty little boys.'

A child 'managed' in this way, can only ever develop a meagre personality. He may keep to the straight and narrow path which the carping mother delineates for the doubtful reward of remaining on good terms with her. In doing so he is unable, and in time, unwilling to explore what lies beyond or even in himself. The mental attitude of the four-year-old, 'I'll just ask my mummy' remains with him, long after it should have vanished like the morning dew. He has been so well taught that so much of what he wants to do is wrong, that in later life, he is unable to trust his own judgment. A child thus early handicapped by fears of being himself, or by the belief that his thoughts and abilities are inferior, is never likely to put much into life, or to get much from it.

We shall notice that goodness in a child is much praised when normally one should expect him to behave badly. The very fact that a child is 'surprisingly' tractable in a difficult situation, should be a red light. Far too often, the parent is so relieved to find the child is not being difficult, that she does not look below the surface.

A typical example of this kind is sometimes found in

the case of the natural jealousy to be expected in an older child when the new baby arrives. It sometimes happens that a 'well brought up' child is unusually good with the baby, adores him, wants him to have everything, won't go out without him and the like. But this very goodness is suspect. Like most insincerity, it is often exaggerated. He protests too much.

'May I cuddle him? Isn't he sweet! Can I give him my teddy?' At the same time, he often underlines his own superior behaviour. 'Ugh—look at his dinner all over his face! Isn't he dirty! I don't do that, do I Mummy? Isn't he silly to cry, Mummy? He's wet again! Isn't he a nuisance?'

This distasteful smugness, what schoolchildren call being 'pi', barely conceals a very great animosity towards the infant. It is well known that such 'model' behaviour can, and does sometimes break down suddenly under provocation when an adult is absent, and then the younger child is in considerable danger from a resentment which has never found normal expression. An open jealousy expressed in reasonable annoyance is at least a rock visible to the world, and not concealed under deceptively calm waters.

This whole question of goodness is tied up with the idea of conscience, a concept which our grandparents found useful and very effective in guiding the child along the path of right conduct. Like many other of their tenets we have tended to discard it in modern times, or at least to soften it. Many a child in those days, trembled nightly beneath the flowered text hung over his bed: 'Thou God, seest me!' The twentieth century, more indulgent with its children, has soft-pedalled the theme, and some educationists have followed the swing of the pendulum to the uttermost in

the other direction. Don't let us burden our children with ideas of guilt, they cry. Let them be free—'uninhibited' is the favourite term. No good comes of this preoccupation with sin. Most of the sufferers from anxiety neuroses, depression, melancholia are those whose conscience has been too quick and tender. Away with it!

But it happens, that like many other of our grandparents' ideas whether of dress, furnishing or thought which we have once discarded, the idea of conscience has returned as vigorous as ever. The most determined upholders of 'free discipline' have been concerned to find their protégés unwilling, and even unable to cast all restraint to the winds. The words, 'I'm sorry' are blurted out to adults who have never demanded an apology. The quick dye of shame colours the face of the child who has never been told 'I'm ashamed of you. You should be ashamed of yourself.' A rebellious, 'I don't care!' is quite often terminated in a howl of misery before a reproof has been spoken. Most of us who have had dealings with little children would assert that if naughtiness is natural, so also are guilt-feelings—that is to say, both arise within the individual without our help!

We can begin to see signs of this self-criticism in children round about the end of the third year. Before then, as most parents know, a child's views of the wickedness of his conduct are vague in the extreme. When he drops a plate and it breaks into a thousand pieces, he bursts into tears because the noise and the sudden disintegration of something that was whole frightens him. But his tears a year later, are tears of remorse, perhaps because Mummy will be angry but also because he realizes he is the agent, and that he has

destroyed something she prizes. His 'I'm sorry' then, has a meaning which it could not have had a year before, even though he might have said it on request.

Similarly, Four Years may refuse to show a visitor a toy, but while he snatches it away, he will watch his mother with a reddening of the cheek, knowing he has acted badly even though nothing is said. It is indeed, at this stage of life, the fourth year, that most parents begin to find their children perceptibly less trouble because of this self-criticism. They will say to neighbours, 'He knows now what he may and may not do' and the word *knows* is significant, because indeed it is knowledge coming from within the child to guide him. And it is a comforting thought that this inner guide will begin to take charge of the individual, to replace us, and spare us our continual reminders.

If we understand how this development comes about, then we can see how to control the power and the work of this force in the child. What happens is that as the child emerges from babyhood and discovers the separateness of himself from the world outside, his need of security increases. He is given ample proof of his littleness and weakness, and he turns ever more insistently to the giver of this security—namely, the mother. As we have seen he very soon realizes, even if he has the most beneficent mother, his need to remain on good terms with her. 'Mummy, don't be cross. Mummy, I will be good. Mummy, you do love me, don't you?'—these are expressions of his deepest and continual concern.

The father too, shares in the mother's prestige, and may become a sinister figure. ('I'll have to tell Daddy about this. I don't know what he'll say.') The child is fortunate if both parents subscribe to the same rules

for then at least he has only one code of conduct to master!

So gradually in the earliest three or four years of life, the child has the world mapped for him. It may well be called the golden age for then—and never again—is everything black and white and easily sorted out. It's naughty to throw toys about, to shout, to interrupt. It's good to clear up your plate, to use your pottie, to say 'thank you'.

In the same way, he is given a clear picture of his two selves, the good boy and the naughty boy. 'That's a good boy,' when the toys are put away. 'That's not like my Robert,' when he pinches his little sister. Inevitably, he finds some of the detail in the good picture not to his liking. He would much rather rattle on people's windows with the other boys and put out his tongue to the tiresome visitor. Hand-washing is a bore and walking beside the pram is dull. But that is his life, and he must accept it for the time being, and the pleasantest way of accepting it, is to believe in it—for the time being. So he pays tribute to it, more or less heartily, for it is tribute to Mummy and Daddy whom he loves.

Nothing can exceed the self-righteousness of the normal five-year-old who has so accepted the precepts of his elders. 'Mummy!' he shrills, 'what do you think, Rex splashed mud all over his mummy's washing, and he said he didn't care!!!' He rarely lets an opportunity slip of calling attention to his own conduct when it has been praiseworthy, especially if a playmate is behaving badly. Four Years, seeing a friend in tears reminds us 'Do you remember once a long time ago, when we were coming along, and I tripped and fell and I didn't cry?' He often brings home tales which show how

consciously he is applying these high standards to others. 'Rex knocked down my battleship to-day, just when I'd built it—wasn't he naughty? . . . Pat wanted some bricks, and there weren't any, so I let him have some of mine.—That was kind, wasn't it?' He has, within himself, a standard to measure himself—and others—the standard of his ideal self, the super-man that he wants to be, the *super-ego* that his parents have sketched for him.

It must not be believed of course, that this is consciously done. It is a subconscious process, built up over the first four or five years of rapid development. The child takes over wholeheartedly the standards of his parents if he is wisely handled, and it is well perhaps that he does so, for he gains something at least to refer to when they are not there, some kind of a 'better self' to measure himself by.

This is the true beginning of character development, for these standards are now virtually, the child's own. And in no time at all they will be modified and added to. In his first year at school, the ideal we have given him may be outmoded, and our stock will fall: 'We *must* take off our shirts and sweaters for games. My teacher says we wear too many clothes. My teacher's cleverer than you. I'm going to do what she says.'

Later on, other friends will give him more food for thought. Reading and learning will expand his views—indeed, throughout life, if he is mentally alert, he may alter the details of his superego. Criticisms of us and our values are our inevitable lot, and we may find them hard to accept when we have so earnestly guided his first steps. But if we recognize that they are signs that he is growing confident enough to stand alone and judge for himself, we cannot but accept them with good grace.

Parents, are, whether they will or no, the first models on which the child patterns himself. The super-ego whispers with the still, small voice of conscience. There is this cardinal difference in our reading of it. Understanding that we have the power to create this idea in the child, we need to take care that we do not make of it a taskmaster. If we do, and we can do it very easily, we are furthering the survival of that rigid conscience of an older generation that we condemn so roundly.

We shall for example, curtail severely the number of times we call him a 'naughty boy', understanding that this apparently harmless phrase which we don't mean him to take seriously of course, does in fact, register even though he makes a face, or puts out his tongue or shrugs his shoulders. If we must give vent to our feelings, we shall say more accurately, 'That was a naughty thing to do.'

This may seem a trivial distinction to make, but in fact it is one which is important to the child. In the first case he is conscious of our disapproval of himself; in the second, of our disapproval of cruelty; greediness or the like. The realization, 'Mummy doesn't love *me* because I'm naughty' is literally unbearable to a child. He is virtually crippled if he believes this—however erroneous his belief. But 'Mummy doesn't like *it* if I'm greedy' is quite bearable and he will make efforts to control this tendency in himself.

It is not generally realized that these tormenting thoughts that flourish in an atmosphere where criticism of the child is the rule, fill him with anxieties which may emerge in behaviour irritating to the very adults who are responsible. For example bed-wetting, nail-biting, nightmares, tempers and so on may be trace-

able to the child's fears of not coming up to scratch or of his secret resentment against the parents who are demanding more than he can give.

We shall find our children will respond more quickly to our standards if we show actively and often how pleased and proud we are of their immature achievements. 'You did play quietly while I was talking to Mrs. Blank. Thank you!' 'I'm glad you let Bob have your best engine when you were playing trains. That was kind!' This pleasant assessment of their progress in the difficult art of living is very different from a parental indulgence that exclaims: 'You are a clever little boy!' a dozen times a day. It is a sober underlining of the attitudes we hope they will adopt and make their own, and if we are consistent they will be in no doubt as to which these are.

Before we can really help our children to be good, we need perhaps first of all to be sure what we mean by goodness. We must make up our minds once for all that 'being good' does not mean anything as negative as 'not giving any trouble'. We must boldly maintain before the world of our neighbours that the standards we expect from our children are different from those of an adult, and we must be willing to let them approach adult standards in their own good time. Only then will the personality be rounded and full, and only then will the goodness they exhibit be refined out of the crude metal into true gold.

CHAPTER FOUR

Manners Makyth Man

But why must children be rude?

‘THE ONE thing I can’t stand (or won’t have) is rudeness!’ ‘Downright impudence!’ ‘Sheer insolence!’ This is the general adult standpoint when a child falls from grace in matters of courtesy, and most of us declare war at the first signs of this failing. The toddler who cries, ‘Go away—I don’t like you!’ and reinforces his wish by a push or a hiding of face, is gently, but none the less reprimanded: ‘That’s naughty! That’s rude! Say you’re sorry!’

The battle is on and it is a source of annoyance and worry to many parents that it seems to drag on with the passing years. ‘How many times have I told you not to snatch? . . . Don’t point! . . . You’re old enough to know better! . . . Will you never learn? . . . I will not have you answer me back!’ We look round for causes to explain our failure to eradicate this fault. Are we too lax? Is it time to give serious punishment or a good talking to? Is it the new school, or the new housing estate, or the new people over the way? Or is it just modern children?

We shall find the answer if we consider first what rudeness is. It is surely, nothing more or less than a failure to realize what other people are feeling. The man who jumps the bus queue in the rush-hour, the woman whose confident manner secures her priority

at the counter, the tactless friend whose remarks make us fall out of love with the new hat we have just bought, the fourteen-year-old who sniggers at the lady soloist's facial expressions, and Four Years who says to his mother at a refusal, 'You're a silly old thing!'—all these have failed, either deliberately or unwittingly, to put themselves in the place of the other person.

Once we realize this, the whole question of rudeness in children falls into place. Children are rude because they literally do not know any better. In the first place, their own immature feelings prevent them understanding that other people may be hurt, or insulted or embarrassed by their attitude. Four Years falls over, and goes about the next few days with a moustache-scab beneath his nose. 'What's that?' asks an interested group of friends. 'A scab, what do you think?' he answers, and his annoyance is confined to the hold-up this topic means to their games. He does not mind being stared at in the least.

We shall have to wait ten years before a spotty face makes him think seriously of becoming a hermit. So he points out with shrill satisfaction a negro on a London bus, a legless man swinging along between crutches. 'When you say anything about anyone another time, say it quietly, just so that I can hear,' whispers his mother. 'Why?' 'People don't like to be stared at.' 'Why?' 'Well, you wouldn't, would you?' 'Why?' The only answer which seems to close the problem is in fact, a peremptory, 'It's not done!' or words to that effect.

Secondly, the enormous range of things that aren't done must seem well-nigh inexhaustible to the child. He learns that when visitors come, they are offered the first fruits of the table, but while staying in Grandpa's

house he is told to give him the choice of cakes. He rebels indignantly: 'Why? He's not the visitor!' If it is rude to say unkind things about people, it appears that it is accounted rude also to say nice things. Personal remarks are taboo, and so is saying what you think, and so is saying nothing at all. He masters one rule only to find it cancelled by another. His little brother is permitted remarks which he dare not utter. Learning not to be rude is learning to play a game where the instructions vary with age and circumstance. It is not to be wondered at that books on etiquette will always find a market!

Thirdly, the child's own development leads him to transgress our code of manners according to his needs and drives of the moment. The young child, delighting in the richness of language, does not hesitate to apply to his elders and betters, phrases which have been applied fondly, jokingly or seriously to him. 'Oh, you are tiresome!' he protests, as mother interrupts a delicate brick-building operation with a clean handkerchief and a request to blow nicely. All men are equal at this age, and it is fair enough for him to say 'Don't interrupt!' to a visitor, as for his parents to remind him not to do so.

The freemasonry of the early school years, the growing thrill of being accepted as one of a group, and especially a heightened appreciation of what is funny in life, often produces a new crop of crudities. The ecstatic reception by the other members of the family of: 'This cake would do nicely for the rockery!' ensures its nauseating repetition for months on end at the politest tea-table, and the tendency to nickname everybody is an hilarious pastime which does not seem to lose its appeal. Flatfeet, Stinker, Fishface—these are

sources of amusement which they cannot understand other people not enjoying.

Adolescence too, fails to bring any noticeable improvement in the matter. Indeed, many of us may feel the older boys and girls are most seriously at fault, chiefly perhaps, because they are now mature enough to see clearly how they can hurt the all-powerful adult with whom they happen to be at odds. The girl who is refused lipstick and high-heeled shoes can retaliate with public strictures about narrow-minded and old-fashioned parents; the boy can get his own back in a family feud by appearing before a distinguished visitor in a grave state of untidiness and with an appalling knowledge of the wrong table manners.

Unintentional lapses of good taste, too, frequently occur at this time when the child's social responses are not equal to the occasion. 'Have you worn the scarf I gave you yet?' asked an aunt of a favourite teenage niece. 'No—I never wear scarves,' replied the child. The remark is tactless, but it is not heinous, and there are few of us who have not made a similar *gaffe*.

But while we may concede all this, be ready to smile behind our hands at the nursery child's 'cheeky' remarks, chuckle to ourselves at his older brother's pertness and apt comments, and suffer for our adolescent's flair for putting his foot into it, we may none the less feel that we should do something positive about the whole problem. It will not be enough for most of us to accompany his discourtesies through life with excuses, or leave it vaguely to a distant future to round off his corners. We shall feel that we would like to do something about guiding him and helping him to reach a standard of mannerliness which is neither too much of a strain for him to reach nor for us to teach.

We might begin by reviewing carefully what we ourselves mean by rudeness. Far too many of us are affronted when our children are rude to us, but have no scruples when they sit on the hearthrug and keep the fire from guests, when they stake a claim for a special cake at tea, when they slam the door or leave it open, blow whistles all the afternoon, run up and down railway carriages, and call after the maid next door. A general level of considerate behaviour on the part of the child geared to his age and development should be our goal, rather than synchronizing the removal of cap, the handshake and the 'How do you do?'

Then, because we sympathize with their immature understanding of the claims of society, we shall take steps to reduce their *faux pas* to a minimum. We shall accept that Pat doesn't like Grandpa's scrubby cheek, or Auntie's winking spectacles, or the strident voice of the affectionate neighbour, and refuse to bully her into kissing and greeting and bidding farewell. We shall instead hustle her off to bed, calling a friendly 'good night all!' on her behalf, or hide her behind our skirts while we talk to her *bête-noire* of the moment. We shall explain, out of her presence, that she is shy, and persuade these people to wait for a voluntary approach on her part. And we shall assure Pat that she need not say 'good night' unless she wants to—no one will mind. This will arouse in her far more effectively the wish to conform with polite custom than any other means.

As the child grows, he can be helped to understand that there are other ways of looking at any situation beyond his own, and if we choose examples within his grasp, he will be quick to learn. His hearty roars of laughter at Rex who appears with a swollen face may be countered by: 'Isn't he plucky to come out and play

when it must hurt him very much? Is it very bad, Rex? The good-natured humorist of ten years must be shown firmly that his witticisms may, in fact, be ill-natured, and this can be done without crushing the fun of life out of him. Similarly the adolescent can be told pleasantly and in private why his remark was hurtful without making him feel that he will henceforth be an outcast from society, or that we bear him a grudge for 'not knowing better'.

Finally, we cannot do better than remember that it is not an incessant battle against rudeness which will bring our children to a courteous frame of mind, but an incessant upholding of mannerliness in our relations with them as well as with our guests and other adults. The child who is 'always answering back' is the child who is always being answered back! To refuse to give back rudeness for rudeness is to take the sting out of his tail. If we give politeness we are showing the child that there are other bills of exchange in life.

Four Years, reprimanded by his father, screwed up his face into an alarming gargoyle, which his parent failed to observe. 'Well, what do you think about this face then?' he challenged, somewhat ruining the fear-someness in the process. 'I don't think anything about it,' was the devastating reply. 'Let's talk about something else.'

Remorseful reflection about his own rudeness can come only when the child is not disturbed emotionally. To chastise when he is resentful is to add fuel to the fire. 'You fool!' says the nursery child as mother interferes with some pursuit. 'That's a funny thing to say,' she replies unmoved. 'I wonder where you heard that?' A few days pass, and the same expletive occurs. 'I don't like to hear you say that,' she remarks quietly. 'It isn't

a nice thing to say and it isn't very sensible. I did ask you to move your things before I set the table, don't you remember?" And after a day or two, another incident. 'You f——!' he cries, and stops. She smiles. 'You were going to say, "You fool!" weren't you?'—'Yes, but'—with triumph—'I didn't, did I, Mummy?'

This is the only learning to be polite that is worth anything—the learning that comes from within, from the self which censures and approves and applauds and which, growing with the child, will develop into a friendly attitude of mind which is at the root of all genuine courtesy.

CHAPTER FIVE

Giving is Living

How can you make them share, give and co-operate?

EVERY MORNING in the summer, the two-year-old was taken to the window to see the sun rising in its splendour. 'The sun,' he said reflectively, 'the sun is getting up—for John.'

The remark expresses to perfection the attitude of the little child to the rest of existence. His mode of thought is more primitive than that of the fourteenth century which merely believed the sun and planets revolved round our earth. To the little child, the sun rises for him alone, and the universe revolves round him. With the poet he says, 'I swung the earth, a trinket, at my wrist.'

We need not then be surprised if, in his mind, the rest of his environment obeys the same order of things. Mummy was created for his benefit—no matter how many other people or things clamour for her attention, no matter how unequal she may feel to answering his demands. 'Aren't you going to get up *yet*?' he calls callously, when for the first time in his four years of life she is ill and has had breakfast in bed.

The home and everything in it is assessed in a similar way—for its usefulness and amusement to him. He moves through this world of his, free of the bonds of time and circumstance. He wants to paint and balances paper and water-pot over the knives and forks already

set for dinner. The house is spic and span for visitors, but he is laying his railway lines in and out of doorways. In the middle of a tea-party at a friend's house, he will jump up and say he is going home.

It is no wonder that attempts to modify these views by explanation, fall on stony ground. He shows boredom when he is told that Mummy has a headache, and is inclined to take reminders that some things in the home are other people's as a personal grievance. Statements that his wishes must wait, produce in him a 'nobody-loves-me' look, and perhaps a genuine feeling that people are out to put obstacles in his way.

So the popular verdict that children are naturally selfish, want everything their own way, aren't happy unless they are being attended to, is inevitable—and to some extent, true.

Children are selfish in the first place, because their knowledge of the world and of the needs of other people and things in it, is severely limited. They think only of themselves because they do not know enough about other things. A boy of seven laughs at the two-year-old who thinks the sun rises for him, but he may well believe in private, that it rises primarily for the great white nations, and that as an afterthought it visits other countries. The fourteen-year-old again, is more accurate in his beliefs about the solar system, but it is doubtful whether he has seriously considered that his mother has any life of her own apart from mending his football shorts and thinking up a wizard high tea!

Moreover, the young child's needs are urgent in a way we have perhaps forgotten. He bangs his spoon vigorously on the tray of his high chair to summon his dinner, and adds to it his cries and kicks. We have learned to wait, even while we keep an eye on the tardy

waitress. He takes where he will when he is playing with others, no matter if the red lorry is Bob's last birthday present and he was playing with it: we can respect a hundred and one taboos without feeling either virtuous or hard-done-by in so doing—'She likes that chair—I'll leave it for her.'

Further, if children are selfish, we must admit that many things in their environment conspire to make them feel that their conception of the universe is right, that they are in fact, His Majesty the Baby. Inevitably the home is organized to a great extent round them, and they must become aware of the daily debates that issue in resolution. 'We won't go to Auntie Ray's—there's nowhere for them to play there, and we should have to leave directly after tea . . . We'll have rice-pudding—they like it and it's good for them . . . We can't go abroad till they're older; it'll have to be the seaside again . . .'

Finally, the child's physical inferiority in a powerful and material world, makes him necessarily the one who is 'given in to' rather than the one who gives out—of himself or his possessions. We give him of ourselves because we must—if for no better reason, and we do not expect a gift from him in return for ours. If his motto seems to be 'You give and I take' it is because for some time he is in no position to give anything.

The whole question of present-giving and present-taking by children which arises here, strikes many adults disagreeably and is worth particular attention if only because these material transactions are tremendously important to the child. Christmas for example must seem to many of us a ghastly travesty of the original spirit where our children are concerned, and birthdays run it a close second as being the other great

occasion when You Get What You Want. So often these joyous occasions are spoilt by some distasteful scene we should like to forget! How often the exclamation of joy is cut short by one of annoyance. 'Oh, that's just what I wanted! Can't I change?'

It is obvious that education in the art of giving of himself and his possessions which alone will make life livable for him and the other people with whom he comes in contact, must tackle the problem along the lines of his limitations.

First, as regards his knowledge of the world and the need to co-operate with others, time will, to a great extent, take care of that. He will, as we have seen, correct his ideas—the solar system among them—and many of his misconceptions will dwindle away, almost without his realizing it. Nevertheless, we can deliberately give him this knowledge of being but a part of a whole, and from his earliest years replace gradually his illusions with the truth.

The family is the natural and ideal school for this. For example, the arrival of a new baby is an event which obviously compels him to step down from his throne—and his abdication need not be painful. He can be helped to enjoy the thrill of cherishing a new baby, and to realize the greater fun there can be in a larger family. Our considerate attitude to other people—the hour-by-hour instinctive watchfulness for the well-being of all and not just for one that is part of normal home life will persuade him more effectively than anything to grow into the family and to share himself. 'Daddy will be tired when he comes in. Let's pull his chair nearer the fire . . . I'm making this custard for Meg—she isn't very well . . . We must save this foreign stamp for Bob—he'll love it.'

It is this kind of atmosphere round the child day in, day out—even if he is an only child—that stimulates the growth of generous feelings towards others. In addition, we can add to it direct suasion, not by telling him not to be selfish, not by forcibly taking away his toys to lend to others, but by showing him plainly that there is delight in lending. ‘May I borrow your stool for a moment, to reach the curtains. It’s just the right height. . . . There, that was just what I wanted!’ This practical demonstration of our need of service, *and of his ability to give it*, will prompt him to offer help on another occasion and to be thrilled if we accept it.

Similarly, he will learn quickly to modify the urgent expression of his wishes if we go about it sensibly. As early as the first clamourings for food in the high chair, we can teach the magic word ‘Soon’—always taking care that we do not make too long a time lag between demand and supply. ‘Later!’ is another word which can be learnt long before the child can utter a word, and he will agree to the sweet tin being put on one side if—and this is the important thing—it really does mean later and not ‘perhaps he’ll forget all about it’.

As he grows older, these demands of ours on his patience can become more numerous, more stringent—but never unpleasant, sometimes accompanied by a word of explanation, and always by a smile. ‘Not now . . . That’s Mummy’s—this is yours. . . . Let’s put Daddy’s pipe safely away—I’ll help you. . . . I should let Bob have his lorry now—you have the truck for a change. . . .’ So step by step, we lead on to the ideas of sharing, co-operating, taking turns, going without—ideas which will be accepted in face of the child’s original resistance to them because he finds that only in this way is life possible. The girl who won’t hold one

end of the skipping-rope, will soon find she has lost her turn to jump!

Again, in time we can show him that other people have their turn as focus of the home beside himself. 'It's Mummy's birthday to-day, so we're going to give her a treat.' This new angle on things will help him to regard himself as part of a whole, no more and no less important than other parts. In this role, we shall ask of him that he gives more and more to his environment. He will be asked to do jobs and be rewarded with a reasonable, but not an excessive amount of praise. A refusal will be pleasantly met—not by a 'You go and do it at once!' or by an aggrieved 'After all I've done for you!' A quiet, 'Well, I shall have to do it myself then. It's a pity just when I've got baby settled on my lap!' followed by a quick performance of the task, will make the child feel more quickly than anything else that he has forfeited the *privilege* of doing something for someone else.

What now can be done to help children to show, or better, to feel gratitude for presents they receive, and in time give, and want to give presents to others? The two things, giving and receiving graciously are tied up together for only the child who has experienced what it is to give, will understand to some degree, the feelings of love and kindness which prompt someone else to give to him. It is this understanding which transforms the crude, 'Look what I've got!' into 'Look what Auntie has given me!' It is this understanding which is worth cultivating, because only then is the child showing an appreciation of the giver as well as of the gift.

Such a frame of mind will naturally find a place in the gradual building of attitude which has been described, and it must be a painstaking edifice if it is not

to crumble at the first breath of disappointment or envy. It is easy enough for example, to point out even to little children, that *everybody* shares in present-giving and receiving at Christmas, and it can be a joyous expedition to go out after much talk and buy chosen gifts for others. Then it is surely permissible later on, to come to the supreme question of what the child would like for himself. 'You will have to think carefully what you would like best of all. It'll be hard to choose out of all the toys there are, so let's go and have a good look.'

It is true that Grandpa's tobacco does not put the same strain on his generosity as does the Wild West set we have bought for his five-year-old cousin, but he has to face the fact that he has chosen as best of all, a convertible clockwork car. If this is put to him in patient explanation, it is not beyond him to fetch paper and string to despatch the coveted gift to someone else.

It is after all, where *we* place the accent that decides what the child shall hear as the dominant note. To say, while wrapping up another child's birthday gift, 'On your birthday, all your little friends will bring you presents', is to ensure that this promise will be recalled many times during the intervening months. Then we cannot be dismayed when the party day arrives if he, as host, sits as it were at the receipt of custom, greeting each guest with 'What have you brought?'

The question of his giving presents to large numbers of people at Christmas time, needs careful consideration too. There is little virtue in supplying him with a shilling or two to buy some trifle for numerous relatives, when he is clearly aware that they are likely to return the gift tenfold. Nor is it much better to sit him down

firmly to make a supply of spill-holders or calendars for general distribution because, 'You must give something.'

But there is much to be said for encouraging him to look through his old stock of Christmas cards to find one with flowers because 'Auntie loves flowers' and to help him paste it on a pad of threaded-up papers for shopping lists because, 'she always likes one in the kitchen'. Here indeed, in the old, trite phrase, 'it's the thought that counts', for the thought is the only enduring thing we can plant in him.

From time to time, we may suggest to him that he goes through his toys to see what he can give away to children who haven't any—firmly rejecting offers of any that are too broken to be of any use to him or anyone else. He will bring thought to what he can reasonably spare!

'I don't really want little teddy any longer. I've got big teddy, haven't I?'

'Yes, and I'm sure another little boy will love him. What a surprise the children will have when matron opens the parcel!'

'What will she say?'

'She'll say, "Who would like this dear little teddy?" And all the children will——' The story goes on. The young giver listens, and his mild feelings of loss give way to a new experience—cheerful giving. He does not need extravagant praise for his kindness. He is happy to give.

This leads us to the question of helping our children to feel grateful, or as adults put it, 'saying thank you nicely'. The child who has been allowed to think of Christmas as the supreme time for getting things, is never really going to be content with a sock hung on a

bedrail. He will want a pillowcase as well, and a parcel at the foot of the Tree, and some little toy hung on it, and a prize for winning a party game and all the charms from the crackers and so on—and none of these will be quite what he wanted, or quite as good as he hoped.

But the child who hops about on one leg waiting to give the daily help the bright pink bath salts he has spooned into an empty jar for her, is the one who is thrilled when he finds that out of a dozen cards on the mat, there is actually one for him. His 'thank you' for a gift may take the form of an abrupt disappearance to a corner where he can examine his new treasure in peace, but he has gone farther than the child who, while he unwraps is asking: 'Is that for me?' of the next parcel to be distributed.

As the years take him farther away from the age of innocence, there may be many occasions when the gift falls short of expectation. Here again, the child who has wandered round the sixpenny stores trying to find something that Auntie would like, will find it understandable that she honestly thought he would like a wooden pencil box instead of the propelling pencil he had hoped for. He may be disappointed, but he will summon up a smile, and he may reflect that the pink hair slide he bought for her was perhaps not a very good choice either. . . . He may still find writing 'thank you' letters a bore, but he will want to write them in theory at any rate, and in this again he has progressed beyond the child who sees no reason why such letters should be written, because he himself has never learned to give.

Children can be as conspicuously generous as they can be selfish. Much depends on watering the grain as small as the mustard seed. Four Years having filled up

the coal hod and swept up round the coal bin was thanked, and invited to come for a kiss. 'I don't want a kiss,' he said. 'I did it for nothing.'

It is this giving of the self for nothing that they are waiting to learn. It is only for us to show them how.

CHAPTER SIX

Playing at Life

Why do children play, and what's the use of it?

'RUN AWAY and play!' How often does the harassed mother give vent to these words—and what a mistake it is ever to use them! In the first place the child interprets them (correctly) as 'Run away and don't bother me—I don't want you just now!' So he wanders off disconsolately, unsettled by this most disturbing of thoughts, and returns again and again like a nagging fly to reassure himself that she has not cast him out for ever.

Apart from this most serious error however, is the implication in the words that *what* he is playing is of no consequence—as indeed is often the case. Children's toys are frequently spoken of and chosen from this viewpoint—'It's only for him to play with. . . . It'll do to keep him quiet. . . . It's just to amuse him.'

This is surely an alarming way of regarding the way our children spend the major part of their waking lives—a part which more than anything contributes to their full development. Play is the main channel through which knowledge of the world flows to them. Through play, they are continually discovering new things about themselves and the world in which they live, and are learning to become masters of their environment. How then can children's play fail to be a source of constant interest and revelation to us? It is the book of our child-

ren's lives waiting open, ready for us to read and learn from it.

A child must play fully if he is to develop fully and to understand how richly play can contribute to his personality, it is worthwhile considering how it affects his threefold being—his physical, intellectual and emotional selves.

Its effect on the physical self, the body, is the one most usually appreciated and catered for by parents and toy-makers alike. Every mother is aware of the infant's delight in kicking and makes opportunities for free activity of this kind, but there is often a tendency to restrict toddlers out-of-doors to a walk round the six-penny stores or along a crowded shopping street where hands must be held or 'you go in the pram'. Frequent opportunity to run, jump and climb for the young child is essential and the only truthful answer a fidgety child can make to the exasperated adult's 'Can't you sit still?' is, 'No, I can't.'

The young child needs also, opportunity to develop finer physical movements of hand, finger and eye, and so we should offer him a variety of small objects to finger and manipulate, and these are by no means restricted to shop-bought toys. A young child will enjoy trying to thread a bootlace through the eyelets in his own shoes, to put a cork in a bottle or a lid on a box, to push an empty cotton reel on and off a blunted skewer. A bowl of water with a jug and one or two small containers of various sizes and shapes will give him endless pleasure.

It is amazing how quickly a toddler will learn to play safely and well with these things as he gains the mastery over first one piece of material and then another. Innumerable things about the house will suggest them-

selves as things 'he might *like* to play with'—not things which will just keep him quiet—and these will be added to in number and intricacy as he grows older. Every child, (not only boys) will delight in learning to use a few simple tools, and though happily the days have gone when we expected little girls of five to sew lawn with fine needles and cotton, we can give them bright wools and bodkins to sew canvas or coarse stuff which they will enjoy using.

In these ways play obviously helps to develop a fine sturdy body and neat skilful movements, but its value in satisfying the intellectual self is no less considerable, and just as exhilarating to the child.

'Mummy, what's it for? . . . How does it go? . . . Where? When? Why?' The questions tumble out incessantly. Each answer seems only to pave the way for another question, and the exhausted mother of three-year-old wonders if they will ever end.

But after all, the questioning pre-school child has only succeeded the baby whose eager, sticky fingers were into everything, and he in turn will be followed by the youngster who comes late home from school because he stopped to watch a steam-roller at work. Mental growth begins with the physical—at the moment of conception—and the child must satisfy it with every means in his power—by touching, asking, watching and interfering. That is why we should try to provide for our children at home, play material which will stimulate their mental powers.

Most parents are pleased at the idea of their children learning. They want to see them 'get on' and like to record evidences of their intelligence. So they are often more sympathetic to play viewed in this light, than play which is 'just play' and therefore a 'waste of time'.

But the child's continual interest in every slightest new experience in the world about him, is the beginning of all learning. As every mother knows, he will stop playing with the most elaborate toy to ask, 'What you doing?' and will follow that up promptly with, 'I want to do it too.' And while sometimes this expresses a desire for companionship, it also reveals the child's desire to 'be in on things'. So he wants to learn to cut with scissors, roll out pastry, vacuum the floor, wash the cabbage, strike matches—in short to enter actively into the life about him.

In this way, through his play, he amasses a multitude of facts about the physical world, and begins to understand something of its mystery. He learns that a cylinder (a tin) will roll backwards and forwards, but that a sphere (a ball) will roll in every direction. He finds out that a ball of a certain texture (rubber) will bounce, and that one of another texture (wool) will not. He discovers that one brick must be put squarely on another to balance, but that you can balance a stick by resting it on a pivot in the centre.

Little by little, he learns hundreds of abstract truths in concrete form—though he is quite unable to formulate them in words. And gradually, the great, incalculable world in which he lives—a world in which things happen without any warning to him—in which fire burns, and doors pinch and plates break—a world which might so easily be terrifying, becomes something he understands and can deal with, because he has found out about it.

The proverb, 'Little things please little minds' is rarely spoken but with contempt, but it is one we should take to heart. Only little things *can* please children, because they alone can be absorbed by the young mind.

To us, these tremendous facts about the world are commonplace—we learned them along ago, but for the child nothing is too ordinary or too trivial for him to examine, explore and ask about.

Everything he touches will be something more added to his experience, and the richer this experience is, the more eagerly will he face the wider and more mysterious world of school. It is this eagerness which will carry him forward through every stage of his development, over every obstacle, and from one hobby to the next. His insatiable curiosity will lead him on like a will-o'-the-wisp, and though sometimes we may sigh for a respite, it is this which makes all the difference between an interested and an apathetic child—and man.

Finally, play has a value for the emotional self which only modern psychological medicine in recent years has revealed to its fullest extent. 'Let's play at schools.—No, mothers and fathers!' The little group wrangles for a while as to who shall be teacher and who the baby, and then settles down to play, arguing, quarrelling, changing the game in mid-stream or starting afresh.

Many a parent watching these games must wonder why children come back to them again and again. It's a tiresome world they portray in their make-believe—a world where the baby is always howling and the mother fussing, the pupils are rude and the teachers are hopeless. It is in short, a world where all the children are masters, and the adults are fools. With older and tougher children the players may be equal in status. The games may be called 'coppers and robbers' or 'cowboys and Indians', but the play follows the same lines. It is each man for himself. They are full of aggressive behaviour and conflict one against the other.

Why should it be so? The answer is, that in this kind of play, children are finding release for emotions which most of the time cannot, or must not, find expression.

We adults are not nearly self-conscious enough of the way we must appear to children. Do we ever seriously remember that to the toddler, the world must appear peopled with giants—giants who, for no apparent reason, suddenly sweep him off his feet and carry him bodily wherever they will? And though sometimes the handling may be loving, and he may be covered with kisses, at others he may be snatched up just when he is interested in some activity of his own. No wonder he frequently cries and struggles to be set down! He must feel himself utterly powerless and there must be times when adults are terrifying to him.

Even when he has grown and perhaps stands as tall as an adult, they are still giants to him in the power they hold. They have the right to say Yea or Nay, to give or withhold. It is natural, that however loving and reasonable we are, a growing child should feel resentment against us long before he can express it, and when adolescence comes and he feels able to do so, many parents are genuinely hurt and astonished.

So it is *necessary* for a child's mental health that he should be able to express his feelings against people in play, and this of course he is doing in the make-believe games we have described. Children play out their feelings of happiness and contentment with the world too, but we do not raise our eyebrows at these games. It is the others where they are disputing, fighting and being spiteful that we are so ready to put a stop to. 'Now, you children, that's enough! Be nice to one another!'

After all, to a child, a lot of our restrictions are incomprehensible—the whim of a mother who, for some

obscure reason of her own, sets out to thwart him. All right. He loves her, and cannot punish her, but when we find teddy head downwards in the wastepaper basket, we may be quite sure that the little boy who put him there, is paying teddy out for something he himself has had to do, and would have protested against if he had had the power. When we deprive a child continually of what he most needs—love—he will get his own back by depriving other children of their toys and fighting them.

We ourselves know, that one of the best ways of getting rid of a fit of anger, is to chop up a box or beat the carpet. The feeling we experience in gaining the mastery over something else, wipes out our own feelings of anger. And in exactly the same way, throwing a toy across the room or jumping on one, gives a child a reassuring sense that he has power over something, at least.

This is not to say of course, that a child must be allowed to destroy anything he wants to, but he can be allowed, when the time and place are right, to be noisy, to order others, to bang and shout, and to work out his conflicts with others in his own way. So, many of these spontaneous make-believe games give him the release he needs—opportunities of proving to himself that he is not really weak—that he can punish and dominate others as well. But alongside these aggressive feelings go his secret fears of the world in which he lives.

Again, however loving and serene we are, we cannot remove fear entirely from our children. That is a part of their human heritage. But we shall find them expressing these fears in play, and mastering them if we allow them to play freely. When a toddler growls at us and says, 'I'm a lion and I'm going to eat you up' he is

pretending to himself that he has this power, and if we express appropriate fear in this game, we are helping to give him this illusion. His ability to frighten *us* makes him feel there is less chance of anything being able to frighten *him*.

All perilous games such as climbing on walls, balancing along a plank, are accompanied by cries of 'Watch me!' so that all may admire and agree that he is brave. And the adult can best help him by allowing a judicious amount of such dangerous play instead of wringing hands and crying 'Come down at once, you'll hurt yourself!'

Play to the child, is a safety valve for his emotions. It is his most eloquent way of saying what he feels, because he cannot say it in words. If we look at our child's drawings, watch what he builds, or listen to the way she talks to her dolls, we shall learn much of that child's inner world and be able to help him in his struggle towards maturity.

Play, which helps to develop his body and mind will do the same for his emotional self. This is the one aspect of it which is least considered perhaps by adults, but it is probably the most important, for on a child's well-balanced feelings towards the world depends all his future happiness and the happiness of others. For the child it may be true to say, 'Play is the gateway to life.'

CHAPTER SEVEN

The World's Mine Oyster

How seriously should we take our children's hobbies?

THERE ARE few children above the age of ten or thereabouts who are without a hobby of some kind, and most of them would assert they had several. Certainly every teenager can look back on a history of collections of stamps, coins, birds' eggs, matchbox covers and the like, each one in turn becoming the rage, and everyone of them falling into more or less rapid decline.

This enthusiasm of children for their hobbies is usually paralleled by an equal lack of sympathy for them on the part of most adults. To the child they are devouring interests which occupy every available minute of spare time—while they last. To the adult, they are often so much clutter, occupying every available corner of the house—snippets of cardboard and sticky tape, dead and live specimens of moth and caterpillar, evil-smelling saucers of skeleton leaves and growing carrot tops. And most of them to the onlooker, seem to be all promise and no performance.

Yet our children's hobbies, or in more general terms their leisure activities, should be objects—if not of enthusiasm to us—then at least of sympathy, and sincere sympathy at that. For they are significant in a way that nothing else in the child's life is: they are his free and undictated choice of what he himself wants to do. This alone makes them immeasurably important,

not only to the child who, for the greater part of his life is doing what others want him to do, but also to us who seek to know more about him.

We do not always consider how much of our children's lives are necessarily ruled by others. Their day is planned—time to get up, to dress, to eat, to play, and their work at school and in clubs is largely chosen for them. They exchange the doing of what we want for the doing of what teacher or club-leader wants, and though much of this may be congenial to them, it is not primarily motivated by the supreme consideration of spontaneous choice.

The world then, sees our boy as a rule as it wants him to be, sitting at a table at home eating or doing his homework, or at a desk looking attentively at a blackboard, his mind following another's, and this is the boy we want. But the boy who, bespattered with oil and grease, spends his hour before bed taking off the wheel of his bike and putting it on again, is being the boy he wants to be. It matters not a scrap that he only wants to be that boy for four weeks and thereafter will take to fishing with the same passion, or that to us it is a senseless pursuit. It is his time for being exclusively himself, for taking from the world what interests him, and giving to the world something that he feels, rightly or wrongly, he can give.

For this reason alone, every hobby is valuable, no matter how transient or how unworthy we may feel it to be. The official pursuits of the rest of his life may absorb him, may draw into the light of day his hidden gifts, but the pastime he chooses for himself is satisfying some need unexpressed elsewhere, and may develop some quality which is not finding an outlet in school or home. We have only to think in this connection of such

classic instances as the young Florence Nightingale tending her wounded pets and the sick of the village, the child Handel stealing out of bed to play the harpsichord in the attic, or the boy James Watt watching fascinated the lid bobbing up and down on the boiling kettle, to realize that these 'pastimes' may in fact be the most significant ways of time-filling for the individual.

We should not, however, be prepared to tolerate our children's hobbies merely because they may be the seedlings of some future sturdy plant—to allow Jimmy to haunt main line stations and bring home a notebook full of train numbers because we hope that in some obscure way this will pave the way to a senior position on the railways. We must be prepared to accept them as something more rare, more worthwhile than mere utility, to see in them the expansion of the child's interests in the world around him, over-reaching the bread-and-butter questions of daily usefulness. We must believe with the poet that 'time to stand and stare' may be time the best spent for ultimate riches.

The chances are that the child's social life will gain far more from his spare time interests than from his professional status. The old saying, 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy' is relevant here. We all know the dreadful weariness of meeting people whose lives are so spiritually impoverished that they can only 'talk shop', and we know too, the stimulus that comes from talking to others who in their time out of work, keep bees, explore caves, write tragedies, act plays, weave scarves—people who, reaching out to the fullest extent of their personality have grasped life with both hands.

Finally, and perhaps the most powerful plea to

parents for the existence of hobbies—though in fact it is subordinate to the foregoing considerations, is the ancient warning: Satan finds work for idle hands to do. We need not perhaps go to the extent of providing a billiard table to keep our boys at home as the advertisement suggests, but we can be quite sure it is the boys who have ‘nothing to do’—that is, who have no provision for doing what they want to do at home, who congregate, hands in pockets, at street corners.

If now we are persuaded that hobbies are far from evil and are in fact, necessary to the child's development especially towards adolescence, our whole attitude to their ‘crazes’ will change. We shall find ourselves stifling the horrified—‘Whatever is all this rubbish?’ and wipe out forever such condemnations as ‘You don't want to do that! Why don't you do something else?’

On the contrary, we shall find ourselves morally obliged to listen to the latest grandiloquent scheme of making puppets and giving puppet shows and collecting vast sums of money for sick animals. We shall take it as part of our duty to answer in a practical form the inevitable requests: ‘Now have you got some scraps of bright silks, and lots of clean newspaper and some flour paste, and we shall want some new paints . . .’ We shall, in short, feel impelled to help them as far as we can—though taking care we do not supply them with unlimited sums of money and find the materials and do the job. Our contribution and active support will take the form of: ‘Well, go and get my piece bag and I'll see what I can spare. . . . No, you can't have that, but you can have this . . . I haven't got the kind of wood you want, but you might find some in the shed that will do.’

In addition of course, we shall be expected to admire every stage of the process and to applaud the finished result, but we shall feel that at least we are encouraging an active interest in life itself, and incidentally, be getting to know our children better—to see where their gifts really lie, and how this one is deft, and that one skilled with words, and another patient, and another inventive.

It would be unwise to suggest that this implies a smug and smiling complacency on our part for every fad and fancy that floats into our children's heads, giving our blessing to every twopenny ha'penny scheme. But it is worth remembering that we shall only have the privilege of criticizing if we are on sufficiently friendly terms to be admitted to their projects. A caustic: 'Whatever good you think that's going to be to you, I can't imagine!' may be met by silence, but it is a silence effectively shutting us out from further confidence.

If however, while we deplore the hours of labour that go to sticking the pretty faces of Hollywood starlets in a handsome exercise book, we can yet be generous enough to admire the painstaking care in the arrangement, we are then in a stronger position to suggest an expansion of this interest—that the owner might make a collection of famous people in the news, or a scrapbook for a children's ward. Our suggestions may be resisted, and the child may declare her intention of collecting Hollywood starlets for ever, but we have done no harm to point out to her the skill and neatness of her work, and when at last the fad dies, she has this knowledge left to her. We must be fair enough to realize that we cannot legitimately ask a child to stop doing something he has chosen unless we have something equally attractive to put in its place.

One other point for adult despondency in the question of hobbies, is their transient nature which has already been referred to. 'I wouldn't mind if he'd stick to something, but it's one thing after another' is the cry. The thing to be remembered here is that hobbies are, by their very nature, short-lived ventures—at least in childhood and except for a very few cases. They are essentially experimental—the first timid reachings-out of the individual to the tremendous riches of the earth. The child picks them up by the handful: occasionally one catches his eye and he treasures it for a while, only to cast it away as another seems more attractive. He begins collecting butterflies, and discovers he can't bear killing them—goes on to stamps and is bored by the piles of duplicates he gets—takes to chemistry and mustn't use the chemicals he wants—and then perhaps, buys a rabbit, and finds an interest which chains him.

It is true that crazes run through a school, that we may feel he is only following a lead set by others, that all this is leading nowhere—and then we may pause to reflect on the high mortality rate of adult evening classes which start off filled to overflowing in the autumn, and by Christmas are reduced by half as the students find they aren't really interested. Nearer home, we may dwell on the numbers of unfinished pieces of needlework and knitting hidden away in drawers, the barbola work we started in such a frenzy and the equipment for fabric printing we scarcely touched . . . and then we may feel that perhaps our children are not excessively volatile!

There is this we can do if we feel they show no stability of choice at all. Frequently our interest will prolong the life of a hobby. So many children give up

because they feel no one is interested. Even a passing 'Will you show me how far you've got with the model aeroplane you were doing?' may be an effective spur to finish the job.

Again, projects are abandoned often when the child comes to an obstacle he feels he cannot surmount. If we are at hand to help him over the hurdle, to steer a girl through a difficult bit of knitting, or show a boy how his unwieldy collection of stamps will become manageable if he specializes in collecting stamps of the Commonwealth, the child will sometimes go on with renewed hope.

It is through hobbies that many individuals have made their real and most worthwhile contact with the world, and found life more truly worth living. No one can assess what, in the harvest of our child's experiences is going to be 'useful' to him later on, and it would be foolhardy indeed to attempt to restrict his interests to a few items that we have chosen for him. We may reflect that the richer the harvest a child can gather, the more will he be able to plant in his turn.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A Law unto Himself

How far should the child be allowed to be himself?

IN THE previous chapters, we have discussed the impact of the world on the child, how he seeks to adjust himself to its demands and how he can be helped or hindered in this adjustment through the attitudes of the people in his immediate environment. We have seen too, how important a factor play is in helping him to explore this world and himself, and how his leisure pursuits widen and deepen his knowledge of it and his ability to give of himself. It remains for the final chapter in this section to deal with the most important factor of all—the factor of the individual child as distinct from children in general.

First and foremost, we must remember that children react differently in the same situation according to their difference in age—a fact so obvious that there would seem little point in making it were it not that hourly and on every side we meet obvious cases where it is not only forgotten, but indeed has never been taken into consideration.

For example, on a crowded bus at the end of the day, a mother is keeping up a string of reprimands to an obstreperous youngster. ‘Sit still will you? Be quiet! Behave yourself!’ The offending child is not the lusty boy of four or five one might visualize cramped on his mother’s lap, but a white, woolly baby of about eight months, still in the dribbling stage!

There might be something almost comic in the situation, a flow of meaningless words poured over an innocent's head—but there is something sad about it too. It is a pity, to say the least, to see a mother so completely unaware of her baby's babyishness—yet there are many of us equally unwilling to allow our children to be their age.

It is this mistake on our part indeed, which often makes us find our children 'a lot of trouble' just because we expect them to be older than they can be, and punish them for shortcomings which they cannot help. The baby in the bus, as a case in point, had already begun to whimper and was proving quite a job to hold. Yet if her mother had picked her up and let her look over her shoulder for a bit, or found some keys for her to jingle—if in fact she had let the child be her age—she would have kept her happy and found her easy to manage for the rest of the journey.

Similarly, mothers often complain about feeding and toileting difficulties they have with their children, yet these are often created because we are too anxious to get them to 'behave nicely'—that is, like an adult. The child in self-defence develops defiance and obstinacy which takes months and even years to eradicate. Mother may want baby to grow up, but he very wisely refuses to do so before he is ready for it.

One could go on multiplying instances of the same sort. Indeed, we should be constantly on the watch to see whether some kinds of behaviour we object to, are not really the right behaviour for that age. One mother had endless arguments with her nine-year-old girl because she would come home from school hopping and skipping, and not with a ladylike walk. Another thought her two-year-old boy was in need of a specialist's

advice because he would run about incessantly—yet both these children were in fact behaving normally for their age.

Of course, the reverse is true, and there are parents who baby their children. Here is a bus queue headed by a mother and her fourteen-year-old gawky son. As the bus draws to a standstill, she pushes him on, saying, 'There's a seat for you, George' which the boy promptly takes. Most people would agree that the least that should have been required from this boy was that he should have seen his mother to a seat first, and many would expect him to go without for other women if necessary.

The mother's protectiveness which is so vital when the child is young, must be gradually withdrawn so that he is helped to grow up. Some parents don't like their children to play with others in case they get hurt or bullied. They excuse their concern for their particular lamb by saying. 'He's all I've got' or 'He's rather delicate' or 'The children round here are so rough.' Behaviour like this keeps a child back and doesn't help him to find his level and overcome his deficiencies.

Again, some parents excuse defects in their children because they won't admit they are growing up and should behave better. A boy of ten makes an insulting wisecrack about a neighbour, and the mother laughs and calls it a sign of his intelligence. She should really expect this lad to be showing the beginnings of courtesy and encourage him to express his brilliance in other ways.

The question now arises, how are we to know how far we are pushing our children forward or pulling them back? There are three things that can help us.

The first is by reading about children and the sort of

behaviour we can expect from them. Apart from books on child development which are being written, there are advice bureaux in a great number of papers and journals run by experts on the subject. Occasionally talks on the wireless widen our knowledge of common difficulties between parents and children.

The other two ways are more important and perhaps more effective because they go straight to the children themselves. One is to listen to our own children and to watch them and compare them as honestly as we can with others of about the same age.

This does not mean comparing Alice with Angela next door who comes in once a week to tea, and priding ourselves that Alice never forgets to say 'Please'. It means comparing Alice frankly with lots of other five-year-olds whom we don't know but whom we encounter in the park and shops. Then we may have to face up to the fact that she is a cry-baby and spiteful, and ask ourselves if we are not helping to make her like this by being too protective or not protecting her enough.

The other way and the most important of all, is to be guided by the child himself. There is a tendency nowadays for the saying that adults know what's good for a child to be changed into the child knows what's good for himself. This may not always be true, but there is a lot of truth in it. If a child says, 'Please, Mummy, take me to school. Please give me a night light,' it is because he himself doesn't feel old or brave enough to go without this extra help. Children develop at such varying rates, that we cannot expect every child to reach the same standard of behaviour at the same time and we must realize that only the child can really know what he feels.

This sounds like a contradiction of the previous rule

that we should compare our children with others. It is rather a corollary. The other children give the general picture of the five-year-old, but our five-year-old Robert will fill in the details of what we may expect particularly from him—that he approaches every new experience with caution perhaps, while the boy over the way is afraid of nothing and rushes into things.

This leads us to the whole question of that mythical being, the 'average' child. In reality, he does not exist, yet every source of information about children talks about him, because he is an abstract standard by which we may measure other children. So the new mother learns that the average child of such and such an age, should weigh so much, have so many teeth, be able to crawl and so on, and she watches her own child anxiously to see if he conforms.

If, by good fortune, he is overweight, has two extra teeth and can pull himself up, she feels satisfied, and possibly a little smug because he has 'beaten the book'. But if he should not be up to this standard, she is dismayed. She worries, tells her husband about it in the evening, spends time trying to teach the child to stand, pesters him with rusks to bring the teeth through, and tends to become hoity-toity with the well-meaning neighbour who says, 'Doesn't he even crawl yet?'

But if she knew large numbers of children of the same age as her own, she would find probably many behind or in front of hers in development, and if she could follow them up through the years, she would find the majority of these will develop into normal human beings in due course.

Feeding methods and nursery routines are based on the needs of the 'average' child, yet more than occasionally one comes across cases where these have been

flouted and the child has prospered. The value of milk to the young child is much taken for granted, but one may meet perfect specimens of young children and hear they have not had a drop of milk since they were weaned!

Parents wait for the first words with anxiety and rejoice with each new addition to the vocabulary. The child is asked to say 'Bye-bye!' to friends to prove that he is getting on. Yet a five-year-old who had never spoken a word, began suddenly to speak, and spoke *in whole sentences* within a week.

Cases like these—whatever the causes behind them—show how baseless much of the mother's anxiety is in trusting to average performance. The most serious factor, however, is not her worry, but that she inevitably transfers her anxiety to the child. The solemn moment of pouring the milk into the mug, the suspense to see whether he will eat his cabbage to-day or not, the barely suppressed anger when he won't talk, are all observed and felt by the child who reacts with equally marked feeling. The child's reaction may not be of the same nature as the mother's, but it will have far-reaching and devastating effects on him and his relationship with her.

Probably many of us have experienced the humiliation of finding our children don't do what everybody else's child does. We take them to a party and they don't want to play oranges and lemons. They want instead, to trace the central heating system from basement to attic. We take them to the zoo and when every other child is clamouring to be lifted up to watch the lions feed, our boy is outside watching the sparrows come down for cake-crumbs.

In almost every gathering of children and parents,

you will see the same little scene in the corner, the mother bending and coaxing, the child indomitable and upright. 'Why don't you, like all the other little boys and girls? Wouldn't you like to? But it's nice. Look! Everyone else is. Why don't you?'

The truth is, if our children react as do most others, we feel reassured. They're normal. We forget how annoyed we shall be with the eight-year-old, when having decided on a bottle-green sweater for the winter, he pleads, 'Oh no, Mummy, *please* not a colour. I couldn't possibly. All the other boys——' We hate the thought of a lifetime of grey flannels, and yet we worry lest in other ways he shall exhibit a colourful personality, a bright streak of rebellion that will make him stand apart from the others at certain times. We must never forget that the child who behaves differently from others, may be behaving right for himself.

The cult of the average is frequently fostered in families where there are several children. Parents expect all their children to fall into line. The older brother is condemned because the little one is dry at night, and he is not, and it follows that 'You could be if you wanted'to.' The younger child is badgered to rival the brilliant success of his forerunner at school. 'You'll have to work harder if you're going to be like Bill. He wasn't such a duffer at sums.' Yet we must know from experience families who are delightful to know precisely because the members of it have been allowed to develop as individuals and have not been forced into the same mould.

It is perhaps natural for a parent to be surprised at the ugly duckling who isn't like the others and to try with more or less success to turn him into a swan. It is less natural but quite common to expect him to carry

on a family tradition. 'Go on a farm? Nonsense. I've never heard of such a thing. The Blanks have always been soldiers.' We forget that Bob's real love of animals is the operative factor, and a far more insistent one than a record of military honours.

Individual differences make that most precious of human beings, an *individual*, yet we often do our best, even unwittingly, to iron them out. We may accept them tolerantly for the time-being as something the child will shed later on with his dislike of cleanliness. We may even hasten their departure in a kindly way by drawing attention in public to their more comical features. 'What do you think he's doing now? Writing a novel. Of course he can't spell and no one can read his writing, but what of that?' The fifteen-year-old thrusts his manuscript away, and joins with the others in watching television. He is being ordinary and sociable and we have reduced him to the ranks of the average.

How often as adults, do we welcome a meeting with someone different! Refreshing, original, inspiring, charming, delightful—these are the adjectives we choose to describe them! Advertisements cry aloud for 'someone with ideas and initiative!' Originality is one quality which has always been hailed by every people and time and it marks out every great figure in history.

Of course normality is a guide and it would be foolish to discard it altogether and not to profit by the pointers it sets up. The shy child needs coaxing to play with others, the introspective one to join in friendly games with others. We do not need to let an aggressive youngster rule the roost or allow our ballet-dancing daughter to bore every visitor to the house with her performance

in our determination to let our children develop freely. But it should be our concern and delight, to recognize early and to cherish those individual differences which make each one of our children especially beloved because he is so entirely himself, and which enriching him, enrich the world.

PART II

The Child in the Home

How significant are the home background and the people in it for the child's entry into the wider world? And how must we expect him to change towards his immediate environment as he grows older?

CHAPTER NINE

The Hand that Rocks the Cradle . . .

Just why and how is the mother all-important to her child?

THE MOTHER-AND-HER-CHILD is spoken and thought of as a unit, but there are probably many mothers who, while they enjoy their share of the baby's limelight, feel uneasily that their performance is over-estimated. They take their bow, but rather like an actress who becomes famous over night, they are mildly astonished at the press cuttings.

They accept as a matter of course, the endless 'mummying' all over the house---'Mummy, where are you? Mummy, I want you! Mummy, look, I've broken the wheel, I've lost my boots, I can't find my bag, my nose is bleeding . . .' They are used to the quick opening of the door, and then the 'Oh!' on a gasp of disappointment, and the rapid, 'Where's Mum?' They are forced to recognize their value as a doer-up of buttons, a provider of food, string, cardboard, pocket money, a shoulder to weep on when Betty won't play and the boy next door has been rough, and they have been variously amused, or bored or flattered in turn. But they may sincerely doubt the suggestion that they are, willy-nilly the *most important single factor* in their child's life.

The truth is, however, that the mother, (and for this purpose the word 'mother' signifies the adoptive mother, the nurse, grandmother or aunt or whoever takes the child as her own), early becomes the only being essen-

tial to him simply because she ensures his physical welfare. Her step, her voice, her touch are recognized first, because they mean help is at hand. Now he will be fed or changed and something will be done about his pain. She ministers to him and smiles while she does so, and he smiles back because she brings him comfort and happiness.

So her value to him outlasts the sucking and nappy stage and as he grows, takes on a wider significance than mere physical care. He learns to love, because she first loves him. He will cry to be cuddled by her instead of just for food. He will turn her face back to him if she looks at someone else. His lip will quiver if she frowns. Her approval is a vital part of his existence.

Through his relationship with her, he comes to life. His love is shot through with deep undercurrents of fear and anger as when she turns her back on him for a moment or crosses his will. He reassures himself of her love daily and hourly by teasing her, thwarting her, imperiously demanding proof of the changelessness of her affection.

Other adults are immune from these turmoils, from this uneasy see-saw of emotion. Often indeed, they are more competent in managing the child simply because they leave his deepest feelings unstirred. But the scales are weighted against the mother by the excess of emotion poured into them, for her to handle him as easily. She pays and must keep on paying for the unique bond between herself and him and the price must be counted out daily and hourly in expressions of her love. Only by meeting him with patient understanding does she suck the poison out of his fear and fury and in perfecting her relationship with him, bring him to his full stature as an adult human being. It is on this relation-

ship that his harmonious relationship to the rest of the world eventually depends.

Because the mother is the most important individual in his life and his emotions are tied up with her, it follows her words and actions, her manner, her beliefs and her thoughts are immeasurably more significant to him than those of anyone else. Other people may influence him later, but he will never be freed of her influence any more than she can avoid wielding it. She is the first lawgiver and friend, the first guide and teacher. She may be indifferent, neglectful, cruel or the reverse of these. She is always the dominating factor.

To the child, it is as if she stands, an all-knowing guide at the entrance to some vast and entrancing labyrinth—the world. It is she who takes him through the mazy passages, pointing out, describing, explaining, so that gradually he becomes confident enough to disentangle his fingers from hers, and to run on ahead, alone. She presents the universe to him, and as she sees it, so will he. Her boredom will send him listlessly to school at the ripe age of five; her wonder will make him sure that it is exciting to live; her interest will make him alert to find things of interest for himself.

The world becomes not worth looking at, or full of things, rich and strange, as she decides. 'That's only a turncock. You don't want to look at him,' she says, dragging him away from a man circling in magic ritual round a hole in the road. Or she may leave the washing-up bowl at the first clang of the fire-engine to lift him up, her hands dripping, to see it flash past.

In the same way she determines his attitude to the rest of humanity—determines it in her every casual encounter with others. The way she speaks to public servants, shop assistants, waitresses and bus con-

ductors, is far more impressive to him than her duteous, 'Come and shake hands nicely with Uncle Tom.' People share the earth with us, she says to him as she goes about. They have the same feelings and interests. They too want their share of the fire and a seat in the bus. And she can effectively teach lasting class and racial distinction before the child has left the nursery. 'You don't want to play with dirty little boys like that.'

Her philosophy becomes his till long after he can think for himself. 'It's naughty to do that, wrong and wicked. You mustn't do it.' Years later, rationalize it as he will, he still goes into a shop on Sunday with a guilty feeling because she taught him one must never spend money on that day.

The emotional bonds between them are so strong, his constant need of her so essential, that her wishes, commands, prohibitions are fraught with a power possibly she never realizes and which lasts, practically undamaged, throughout life. Her sway may easily submerge his own powerful surge of love in later life. He may find it difficult to select a wife who can compete with his first image of her, and having chosen one, find the new relationship, poor in comparison. This is the root of every mother-in-law problem—the mother and child who cannot relinquish their early hold on one another.

In the same way, the mother can hand on her own temperament. 'Be careful! You'll hurt yourself! You'll fall, cut, burn yourself!' and the naturally robust little boy becomes afraid to play with others and sees the world as filled with terrors. The aggressive mother furnishes the other children with gnashing teeth and sharpened nails, and her boy flies at them at the slightest provocation. The mother who cherishes

a feud against her neighbours will hand on her own inability to get on with others more surely than the colour of her hair or eyes. But the child may also learn from the same source, to lay aside his early impatience, his urgent needs, to assume her self-control and calm.

In adult life, he will be likely to pass his mode of upbringing on to his children, because he has never questioned it. 'What was good enough for my father and mother, is good enough for me. My mother always did this with us, and I can't do better.'

If this were the only factor in child development, every child would reproduce more or less his mother's personality in himself. That he does not, is partly due to his own temperament, and partly because the more wisely the mother has used her influence, the more she will have left him open to other influences—to his father and teacher, scoutmaster or priest, heroes in books and history, or radio and television, and in his fantasy.

Furthermore, the very dominant mother may defeat her own ends. The over-clean mother may well produce a slut, and mourn, 'I can't understand it. I brought her up so differently.' The thrifty grandparent sighs at the extravagant son. The drunkard may be the son of a teetotalter, the atheist of a deeply religious mother. These children are reacting now as adults in a way they were not allowed to when they were young, or are expressing in these forms in later life, their opposition to all their mother stood for.

Very frequently while still afraid to break the spell themselves, they get their own back on the parent who may be no longer living, by allowing their own children to do the once forbidden things. 'I was never allowed to do it, but my children shall be.' So the mother lives

on in her children and grandchildren, obeyed or defied, but always acknowledged.

It is in baby days that she is most aware of a vocation rigorous in its demands. Yet these days see only the beginnings of an influence she can never measure or confine. She tosses a stone into a pond. Long after the splash has subsided and the ripples have eddied away, other ripples under the smooth surface move silently and endlessly to the shore.

CHAPTER TEN

Three's Company

And what place has father in the child's scheme of things?

POLITICIANS AND welfare workers, speakers and writers may discuss from year to year, the mother-and-her-child but it is the great artists of the world and of every age who have revealed to us most fully the indissoluble unity of these two. Tirelessly painting and repainting them folded in each other's arms, or with the child encircled in her embrace, they have demonstrated unforgettably their complete self-sufficiency, removed it seems from the rest of mankind and living in a charmed circle of their own.

But however fundamental this fact of mother-and-child may be, perhaps sometimes other people who come into close contact with children, get a little nauseated with the subject. Fathers, nannies, teachers, relatives and friends after all, labour for children, and bring strong influences to bear on them, yet their relations to the child receive nothing like the same attention.

In infancy, as we have seen, it is essential to give the child a constant sense of his bond with his mother, and she helps to do this whenever she takes him in her arms, or suckles and tends him. The magic circle is complete, but it cannot remain so.

As time passes, the child must learn to give his love to others, and to take from them for his own healthy de-

velopment, and it is evident, that his power to do so, will largely depend on his mother's willingness to let him go. She alone, can open the magic circle for him, till he admits the whole world to his embrace.

The first intruder into the circle, is the father, the adult, who chief of all in the child's environment feels his exclusion from it. In Victorian days, popular belief suggests that the use of fathers was reserved for Punishment, or a Kiss on the Forehead. To-day, we are more enlightened, and allow fathers more privileges—to bring a dry nappy from the airer or supply extra pocket money, or take charge of the Sunday morning walk.

The father's position indeed, is often not an enviable one, for even while the child is still an infant in arms, he may show a marked lack of appreciation for his parent. He realizes very early that the father has a special interest in the mother, and a particular claim on her attention. He, of all the adults who come near her, threatens the infant with a division of her love, and before he can speak, the baby will sometimes push him away as he bends to kiss the mother.

A year or so later, he may, if he has not been wisely handled, show a more pronounced hostility, shouting, 'Go away! We (!) don't want you!' He may demand constant proofs of his superior rights from his mother when the father is near, crying to be picked up, demanding a reply, even wanting to sleep in her bed.

Some mothers make an ineffectual attempt to stem the growing enmity, by saying, 'That's naughty. You must love your daddy' and will follow it up by pointing out how kind he is—'He gave you your tricycle for your birthday.'

Such a policy, however, has no effect on the child who wants far more than the tricycle. Daddy's love

and kindness mean nothing if he is taking Mummy away from him. The only way in fact, to allay the child's suspicions, and to make him turn a favourable eye is, long before he has reached this stage, to show him that Daddy occupies a very special place in the household—a place which he deserves, and which does not threaten the child's safety.

The father himself, beyond being patient and long-suffering, can do little. It is what Mummy says and does, that counts, and because the child loves her, he will want to be like her and to take over her attitude in this, as in so much else.

We do not always remember how forcefully we convey our thoughts to a young child who interprets voice and expression accurately, long before he understands words. 'Be quiet, Daddy's resting!—You wait till I tell Daddy of this!—Daddy will be cross when he comes home!—Oh, go and ask Daddy for it!—Now what will Daddy say?'

Expressions like these, build up in a young child's mind an indestructible idea of Daddy as being of uncertain temper and power, who will be cross and punish, who may be wheedled but never trusted. It is an idea, not easily corrected, because Daddy is not often there to speak for himself, and a year or two later, a mother who has gone on in this way, can say truthfully of her child, 'I've only got to threaten to tell his father——'

The tremendous loss such ignorance of the father is to the child's personality, whether boy or girl, scarcely needs stressing. Apart from the loss in childhood—the joy and confidence for example, in having a daddy who is stronger and braver and cleverer than all the other daddies—there may be far-reaching results in

later life. Particularly in the boy's case is this so, for his development of manly qualities depends so much on his early impressions, when, without knowing it, he models himself on the father.

But in adult life too, we shall see the results, in women who think of their husbands only as Universal Providers, or what is as bad, as Superior Beings. Boys too, who grow up in fear of their father, may transfer this to men in general, or in revenge, may become over-aggressive when they have the power.

Other, and truer aspects of fatherhood, however, can be revealed to the child, and he will absorb these as unquestioningly as the others. 'Let's save it to show Daddy.—Now we must stop and get Daddy's tea. He'll be hungry.—Let's ask Daddy to mend it.—We'll ask Daddy what we'd better do. He'll know.' A consistent attitude of this kind will allay the child's anxiety before it gets too strong, and make him eager to find a place for his father in the family circle.

Much of course, depends on the father's desire to make himself accepted by the child and on his willingness to meet him on terms that the child can understand. He will, if he is wise, share with the mother from the beginning, in the physical tending of him, for in this way the child comes gradually to distinguish a second being whose stronger hands bath and change him occasionally, and whose deeper voice soothes him. What is more important, he learns to accept him and to look for him, for this actual physical care is the only expression of love that he can understand at first, and through which he learns to love in return. Very soon, he will show his recognition and appreciation of his father by smiling a welcome and stretching out his hands to be taken by him.

Once this beginning is established, the father will find as the child grows, innumerable ways in which he can make himself a necessary part of the child's life. He will develop a whole series of special games, of hunting and fighting and rough and tumble, peculiar to him and which satisfy the need in the child to be aggressive just as the quieter games he plays with his mother satisfy other needs. He will enlist his aid in the delightful, messy jobs that fall to his lot, watering the garden, washing the car, clearing out the woodshed, and in these activities, experience the companionship the mother knows so well when the child follows her about the house.

Later, father and children can go off alone on expeditions that only daddies can deal with competently, visits to the science museum, the railway stations or the new building site. Daddy will make permissible the forbidden charm of the toolbox, and give the first lessons in becoming a handyman—show how to clear a stopped-up sink, lay a fire, mend a toy and hold a cricket bat.

These shared activities, enjoyed by both boys and girls at least till puberty, build up a special relationship between the father and his child, and crush the development of any idea of him as the parent to be either dreaded or discounted. The father then assumes his true significance and reveals gifts and qualities different from the mother's and complementary to hers.

It is not so much that the child who is fortunate enough to have two parents is thereby doubly cared for, but that the whole pattern of his life is enriched. The father's lively handling of the child, his matter-of-factness, his freedom from anxiety and accent on courage, bring a robuster element to most children and evoke in turn, more vigorous responses.

The father will discover to his gratification, that there are many times when he can satisfy the child's needs more even than the mother can. He will recognize that he has a very real share in the child's love and find it expressed in incessant appeals: 'Daddy, will you play with me? Daddy, can I come with you? Daddy, will you show me how this works?'

Once he has accepted his father, the child has begun to learn that the magic circle in which he and his mother lived, can extend indefinitely to include other people as well. He knows that his security is not threatened by the intrusion of a third person and therefore that it will not be threatened by others. He feels safe in the unity of his family, and we can ensure that this unity is never questioned by a division of opinion in front of him—at least in his early years. Questions of discipline—to eat or not to eat cabbage, to stay up for the radio play or not, will be discussed in the child's absence, or agreed on in his presence.

We shall avoid expressions like, 'Daddy's girl' or 'Mummy's boy' which divide the family into camps, and mindful of the child's feelings, spare him too many demonstrations of affection between husband and wife, which emphasize his own exclusion.

The child who is secure in Mummy's *and* Daddy's love, may safely be left to learn to love Daddy for himself, and to understand in time, why the best name that human beings could find for a divine being, was Father.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Other Persons in the Play . . .

What room is there for other adults in the home?

MOST CHILDREN sooner or later, have to recognize other actors in the play which centres round themselves and in which their parents play principal parts. Other adults in the immediate environment who must be fitted into the plot, may include a nurse or nannie, a mother's help or 'daily', grandparents, relatives and possibly close friends. These, who live under the same roof or visit frequently, become significant figures against the child's background. Some indeed, may be put officially in charge of him for hours together. Brothers and sisters too, may expand the family circle, but we are concerned here with the child's findings about the adult world in which he is expected to fit.

Now it is scarcely credible that these adults will be faithful replicas of the parent-figures from whom the child first takes his cue. It is fairly safe to assume that each one of them will present viewpoints diverging to a greater or less degree from the standards they have laid down. So he comes very early to recognize a sliding scale of values. Daddy is good for a romp at any time, but the daily help is full of reminders about getting on the furniture. Granny can always be trusted to provide a sweet, even while Mother is dishing up the dinner, and Grandpa to conduct an inquiry as to progress at school. Nannie is a stickler for clean hands and pina-

fores, but Mummy says, 'Come just as you are dear, but do be quick!'

These conflicting views necessarily create some uncertainty in the child and draw from him varying patterns of behaviour in response which irritate, amuse, puzzle or distress the adult as the case may be. 'He's never wild like that with me!' remarks Nannie. 'Always goes mad when she comes!' glooms mother of the mother-in-law. 'A different child when he's here,' says Daddy, lamenting the influence of his father.

Yet there is much to be said for peopling scene one in the child's life with a variety of adult figures who bring into the narrow family circle their personal interpretation of life. 'The more, the merrier,' indeed, might be appropriate here, for merely getting used to adult size, movement and speech is a help to the child who so very soon must make frequent contact with other adults. The aunt who believes in children being kept strictly in their place, prepares him for strangers who do not care to be smiled at over the seat of a bus. The indulgent grandma is reminiscent of the smiling nurse in the dentist's waiting-room who says, 'You come along with me, dear.'

In learning to respond to these individuals in the security of his own home, he is learning how to contact the inhabitants of the world at large—the milkman and the postman, the shopkeeper and the policeman. In short, he is learning social behaviour. Each figure in the home serves as some kind of pattern for other similar figures: all old men may be expected to behave like Grandpa, all comfortable women like the daily help.

The advantages of moving in such a varied scene are, however, not unmixed. For most parents, the problem crystallizes round the question of outside interference,

but for the child it may diffuse itself in a hundred and one situations in the course of his day.

Even giving him over nominally into the charge of another adult as in the case of a nannie, may not always safeguard him from the clash of adult personalities around. When this arises to any marked degree, it may fairly be said that it is due to a cardinal mistake usually made by the employers—their refusal to recognize that they are providing for the child a mother-substitute.

Many mothers who employ a nannie will not accept this fundamental fact. Nannie will be responsible for the child's physical well-being, they decide. She will prepare feeds and wash nappies, superintend the afternoon walk and amuse him. But precisely because she does all these things, Nannie immediately assumes a position of supreme importance *in the child's world*. His first and most powerful sensations centre round his own bodily needs, and he looks to the person who satisfies them whoever she may be. The one who gives him food, puts on a dry nappy, comforts him when he is hurt, and soothes him when he is frightened, speaks to him in the only language he can understand and naturally he turns to her in need.

In fact, if the mother severs very early the physical ties of suckling him, he may virtually become Nannie's baby, just as an adopted child finds a real mother in a woman who is not physically related at all. It is astonishing to how many mothers this inevitable confiding in Nannie at every crisis of scratched knee or lost kitten comes as a surprise, and sometimes as a genuine hurt. They cannot understand how their own child can prefer a 'stranger' to themselves, and may be driven to assert their prior claims by keeping Nannie 'in her place', undermining her authority and altering her

decisions. Or they may base their appeal to their own child on the strength of material gifts and treats. To Nannie will be relegated the monotony of the daily walk, while they reserve more exciting excursions to the zoo or toyshop for themselves.

It would be unnatural for Nannie not to retaliate under such conditions, and as she feels powerless to resist the mother, she tends to take out her annoyance on the child. So he is peppered from one side or the other: 'I suppose she lets you do that. Well, now you'll do what *I* say!'—where 'she' stands for 'Mummy' or 'Nannie' in turn.

The average child will resist these changes in his routine bitterly. A secure world, a world in which he knows exactly what is going to happen next, is very nearly the best of all possible worlds. So he resists passionately. 'You mustn't do it like that! *She* says you mustn't!' Mummy finds he is getting unmanageable on Nannie's day off, and Nannie finds him ruined after the week-end, and the way is paved for the next solution—a new nannie.

It is obvious that in such a situation it is the child who suffers most—not the mother who telephones her friends about Nannie's incompetence, or Nannie who bewails the lack of feeling in present-day employers with her colleagues. The question of what is best for the child, is forgotten—though in fact, both adults firmly declare this is their chief concern. He has become a means of demonstrating to the rest of the household, the superior power of the adult in question.

We rarely consider the effect a situation of this kind may have eventually on the child who is the storm centre, yet while such a case may be fairly easily terminated, many find themselves confronted by similar

difficulties from relatives who, on more familiar terms mingle with the family. Chief among these problem-figures perhaps, are the grandparents who provide special points of interest.

It is unquestioned that this older generation may be able to satisfy the young child's needs in a way even his parents cannot. The slower speech of the elderly is so much more easily heard by the child than is his parents' brisk business-like patter. The slower pace of the old man keeps company with the toddler's first steps. The comfortable spreading laps and bosoms of Grandmas, Grandpa's ritual of lighting and puffing a pipe, his ponderous, 'Tell me all about it again,' the leisurely anecdotes . . . 'When I was a little boy . . . '—all these are in tune with the child's use of time and his interests. In many homes, Granny runs Mother a close second, and Grandpa may be an equally loved figure.

Yet grandparents may be the source of situations emotionally far more highly charged than those with outsiders to the family. To old people, 'the little children running up the road before us who hide death from our eyes' bring a delight possibly even exceeding that which the parents feel—a delight unalloyed by any feelings of responsibility.

Grandpa likes to have his grandson rifle his waistcoat pocket in search of his watch, and Grandma to play marbles on a solitaire board with him because at any moment they can say, 'Run away now!' Adorable pleadings can be yielded to, amusing perversities laughed at. The child indeed, can be enjoyed to the full, because when his pleading turns to whining and his perversity to rudeness—that is, when both are tiring—he can be returned to his parent for straightening.

But there are other and subtler enjoyments to be

relished by both parent and grandparent through the medium of the child. It is a truism that a parent remains a child to his parents however many years there are to his credit, and that middle-aged parents and white-haired grandparents act out faithfully the storms and stresses of many years before. The woman with a home and husband of her own may still carry on against her mother the rebellion of her nursery years over the body of her child. Compelled to keep spotlessly clean herself, twenty, thirty or forty years ago, she will deliberately send her child to greet Grandma with dirty dungarees and tousled hair. Her own child is in fact, saying for her the long suppressed, 'Shan't!' and over his bewildered head the adults wrangle: 'How can you let him go about like that?'—'He's all right—you leave him to me!'

The grandparent fighting against the loss of authority finds every dispute the mother has with her child an admirable opportunity for capturing it again. (When the mother is also a daughter-in-law the rivalry may be even sharper!) 'I can't eat this, Mummy. Can I have a cake?'—'Yes, but finish that first.'—'Oh, don't be so finicky!' cries Grandma. 'Here, darling, have one of Granny's buns. I made them especially for you.'

The fact that 'giving in' on the mother's part on another occasion is equally censured, only proves that it is a pretext for argument that is being sought. The child watches and waits. He is as far from understanding the motives which underlie the conflict as are the adults themselves, but he is as quick as they are to grasp his opportunity for getting what he wants.

Variations on this theme are endless and most people have encountered some of them. Uncles and aunts often enjoy the parent's discomfiture when the

child misbehaves because then old scores arising in their childhood are being settled now. 'Bob may have always beaten me in boxing when we were kids,' the thought runs, 'but his child can beat him now!' As a result of this tardy superiority, advice and criticism is freely offered: 'He wants a good thrashing. . . . You're too soft with him. . . . I wouldn't let him get the better of me!'

In such cases—and they arise inevitably as part of the family unit—there is one primary consideration which should shine steadfast as a guiding star for the bewildered and irritated parent. It is surely, the child's welfare. We must recognize that ultimately he suffers far more than do the adults.

He suffers first, because his security is endangered. The powerful adults around him are in conflict: he is a pygmy among warfaring giants. He can interpret flashing eyes and hasty words and heightened colour, slamming doors and abrupt exits as well as anyone—better in fact, because for two or three years he has to make do with a limited use of language. He trembles and withdraws, frightened where he should know no fear.

Secondly he may often be asked directly or implicitly to take sides—an impossible task for he has already given his affection. Yes, he does love starched Nannie, and fussy Grandma and boring Grandpa! So his only resource in such a case is to attempt to conceal his feelings. He may even feel it wrong to share or show his love to others, and become that most unhappy and most vulnerable of individuals—the affectionless character. He has learned that it is dangerous to love, so the wellspring dries up in him and with it all hope of making satisfying contact with his fellows.

Thirdly, in default of loving, he may take what he can, making off with the booty while the others

wrangle: 'If you won't let me, I shall ask her. She will. I like her better than you!' A five-year-old probably knows no keener delight than when he experiences his power to set one adult at odds with another.

These are desperate results and they need desperate remedies, iron self-control, rigorous patience, unflinching determination to make good come out of what might be evil. We must tackle the situation realistically, recognizing that it exists and that it will develop unless we prevent it. At the outset we must accept wholeheartedly that the child will love other adults and be loved by them—whether we love these individuals or no. And just as we rejoice in every expression of love showered on our children, so we should welcome our children's ability to give love away to others.

When another adult is taking complete charge of the child, we shall take care to discuss with them frequently and in his absence, his changing needs and how best they may be satisfied. This frankness which alone makes Nannie 'one of the family' will mean that responsibilities which are the price for that privilege will be far more gladly shouldered by her.

With members of the family, such official discussion is not always possible and indeed may be actively resented. But it is possible to make clear in the early stages before the child is fully aware of other personalities what our viewpoint is. This can be done not by an aggressive: 'I won't have you telling me what to do . . . I'm not going to have any interference with my child,' but by a pleasant and passing reference to our hopes. 'I don't want him to be fussy over food, so I never ask him whether he likes this or that.' Then if objections are raised they can be settled with the degree of firmness they require. They may be accepted un-

willingly: 'Well, I think you make too much fuss, but you always were obstinate . . .' but this is better than active opposition in front of the child.

Tactics like these begun in the child's earliest days, friendly discussion about his development, leaving out terms like 'old-fashioned' and 'new-fangled' will bear fruit in due season especially—and this is vital—if we show constantly we are glad to share him with others. 'You're ruining him!' says Grandpa when he sees Four Years being cuddled. To other people he says, 'He's wonderful' and may add '—not spoiled at all!'

So when Grandma breaks our inflexible rule of no sweets before dinner, we must say: 'That was kind of Grandma' and to make something coherent out of it: 'I don't expect she knew you always save your sweets till afterwards. Another time we'll show her where you put it beside your plate.' We shall sternly resist the innuendos about her nuisance-value that children interpret so accurately and pass on in the fullness of time and in basic English as 'Mummy says you're silly.' When there is a triumphant 'Auntie lets me' we can say mildly, 'Well, some people think differently from others. Auntie was doing what she thought best.'

Such diplomacy can scarcely be called wearing a mask or behaving falsely or pretending friendship where we feel none. It is rather teaching our children 'to every man his taste'. It is the beginning of that long and gradual change from seeing things no longer as black and white, but as an infinite series of greys—possibly one of the hallmarks of the mature mind. If we take this viewpoint we may indeed feel that these 'other persons in the play' add colour and detail to a picture of life which we, left to ourselves, could only have sketched in simply and in broad outline.

‘My Teacher Says . . .’

What is the teacher’s significance for the child?

WHEN THE child first starts school, he comes into contact with an adult who stands in an entirely different relationship to him from any other he has hitherto met—a relationship divorced from the familiar environment of home. For the first time—an awesome venture—he has to stand on his own feet in making close contact with another adult, and when we consider further the circumstances in which teacher and child meet, it is not surprising that she is regarded by him as someone outside the common run of humanity.

To begin with, he leaves the humdrum environment of his own home, and sees her in the spacious premises of school. She has at her finger-tips all kinds of fresh and interesting occupations, paint and paper, clay and water, pictures, puzzles, toys, beads and counters. She tells him stories, sings songs, and helps him to sing and dance and model.

In her company and under her wing, he meets other children, plays with them, watches them, and matches his prowess against them. He discovers new abilities and new joys in her kingdom, and home and mother suffer a temporary eclipse. We cannot wonder that the formula to be heard so tiresomely during the next few months, ‘My teacher says . . .’ is uttered with respect and admiration.

Much of the child's new-found delight in school, of course, is based on his readiness for it. By the age of five, most children are finding the nest a trifle cramping. But his enthusiasm is undoubtedly often sharpened by the teacher's attitude to him. It is not only different from that of the adults at home: in some respects, to a young man of five, it is a welcome change! It is free, for example, from the surfeiting care and reprimand of mother or nurse. Watchful and ready though his teacher may be for emergency or distress, her energies are occupied in encouraging him to experiment rather than in repressing him.

Further, and happily for him, his teacher knows nothing of his 'funny little ways', his 'highly-strung' temperament and his exceptional intelligence. Nor is she interested in what he doesn't like, and the children he isn't used to playing with. She knows individuals in her class at first, only by their outstanding characteristics—the heavy-eyed little boy whose fussy mother peers at him through the school railings at playtime, the engaging little girl who insists on reciting all her nursery rhymes to the class in place of the admiring audience at home.

The teacher's happy ignorance of our children's idiosyncrasies, her monumental task of bringing thirty or more different children into a socially harmonious whole, and—a fact rarely acknowledged or even suspected by many parents—her knowledge of children founded on her training and experience, give her a decisiveness and wisdom in handling newcomers, which is frequently a relief to the child.

Mothers and nannies who have watched the child develop from infancy, inevitably tend to react far too emotionally to him. Their concern for him is usually

exaggerated and their praise as out of proportion as their blame. At school a child can, if he wishes, sink into relative oblivion, and enjoy life incognito, simply because he is one among many. His accomplishments, whether good or bad, are pleasantly merged with those of others in the community.

The continued tension under which some children live at home in trying to be always Mummy's good little boy, or Nannie's big one, is snapped. Bobby's rebelliousness at school may provoke teacher's annoyance and even her punishment. But because she does not make the same emotional demands on him, his fear of the loss of her love is not so great, and he is able to accept her disfavour without undue distress.

It is no wonder that the first few weeks at school produce marked changes in the average child. He becomes more decisive and confident in his reactions, and seems suddenly grown-up. His play receives an imaginative impetus, and he comes out with new modes of speech and thought. What he has learned at school and what they are going to do next, become the great issues of his life, and in this scheme of things, teacher is naturally the prime mover.

These changes are often regarded with gloom by those who, up to the present, have exerted undisputed sway over the child. They deplore the loss of his 'sweet little ways', disapprove of the companions he has picked up, and are affronted by the teacher's reprimands.

Yet after all, going to school is a momentous event in a child's life. It is his first step away from home in his inevitable journey through life. If he can handle this ordeal with happiness and confidence, we have every cause for rejoicing. Parents who understand this, are able to share in the child's love and admiration for his

teacher and his enthusiasm in school. They accept her for what she is—an influential helper in the preparation of the child for the business of life.

It is inevitable that the teacher's demands on the child and her handling of him, will differ from ours, and inevitable too, that some children will react unfavourably to certain elements in them. A mother may feel her child is being too hard-pressed, that the teacher has acted unwisely in a situation, or that the child would respond better in another class.

Whatever her feelings about the matter, her policy should be to remain neutral in front of the child. ‘Perhaps Miss Black didn’t understand what you said. Perhaps you could have done better if you had tried’—are replies which nip a habit of complaint in the bud, and more important, help to allay the child’s anxiety over a mishap at school, and restore his confidence for the next day.

Some children of course, find the entry into school life more of a strain than others, but we have to help the child to stand alone, and we shall not do this by figuratively picking him up out of the way of the knocks in the world. A great deal of his success or failure in dealing with it will depend on the way we have presented it in the few months before he actually starts. Children who have been warned on numerous occasions a year or so beforehand, ‘You wait till you go to school . . . You’ll have to alter your ways . . . You won’t be able to go on like this . . .’ are naturally going to be apprehensive every time they are spoken to at school and cannot be expected to settle easily. But a child who has been taken past the playground on his afternoon walk and watched the playing groups of children, who has heard the rosy descriptions from others of the sand pit and

jungle-gym and whose mother, without harping on the string too much, has built up the idea of school as a busy and happy place will find him very willing to go with her on the first day.

If the child seems really unhappy at school or in the care of a particular teacher, some interference may be called for. There are few difficulties that a private interview with the teacher—a few minutes' chat before or after school—will not solve, and prove unexpectedly illuminating on both sides. The thing to avoid at all costs, is undermining the teacher's authority. 'Miss Blank is too fussy. I'll have to come and see her. I won't have you treated like this.'

These comments may gratify the child's sense of grievance, and the mother's sense of ownership in her own child—always a lamentable need, but they can have disastrous consequences. The most usual result is that the child immediately, and possibly unwittingly, conveys them back to the teacher, who humanly decides that Bobby is an obnoxious child with an even more obnoxious mother—a point of view hardly likely to make him happier with her.

Or, the mother who congratulates herself on having successfully demonstrated to Bobby that Miss Blank is no good, may find herself constrained a year hence to complain bitterly to her neighbours about the lack of discipline in the school, and even to implore Miss Blank to do something with him.

The more serious result of such an attitude, however, is that it alarms far more than it comforts the child. Since he is sent away from his mother to spend the greater part of his waking life with the teacher, he is bound to feel trust in her if he is to be happy. In his first days at school, he finds that trust well-placed.

He goes to her when he has got his sewing in a muddle and when there is no parent left, and he finds that she will help him or tell him what to do. He notices that she is equally able to deal with the other children, will sort out quarrels in the playground and bathe scratched knees. 'Telling teacher' becomes in fact, the only possible course of action when one is in trouble. All these observations—added to his impression of her unbounded knowledge—help him to feel happy and content at school and willing to leave his mother for her.

But if once the mother begins to throw doubts on the teacher's capabilities—'I've never heard such nonsense! I don't know what Miss Blank is thinking of'—the child immediately begins to share her doubts. Which of these two beloved and powerful figures in his life is right? Loyalty to one means disloyalty to the other, and the resulting conflict will disturb the whole atmosphere of school life.

It is worth remembering that just as school is the child's first experience of the world outside the safety of his home, so the teacher is the first representative of the people in it. It is the child who is helped by his mother to make a happy and successful contact with his first teacher, who will be ready to do the same with his subsequent teachers and with his employers long after school days are over.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Only an Only

Must the only child find life more difficult than others?

THE ONLY child has always been regarded as a problem in a way that individual members of a family are not. He is reputedly selfish and spoilt, always wants his own way and thinks himself cock of the walk. It is no wonder then, that parents with but one child and perhaps with no hopes of having others, worry over the question of his adjustment to life, and may even feel that theirs is, in some sense, a 'deprived' child.

What is in fact the position of an only child, and what can be done to correct the evil fate of growing up without brothers or sisters? How heavily are the scales weighted for, or against him?

First, the only child gains obviously in a material way. Whatever the family fortunes, he is bound to be better off than if he had to share them with others. So he usually gains in the number of toys, the furnishings of his nursery, the quality of his clothes and the sort of school he attends.

It is idle to pretend that these things don't matter to children. They do, and to their parents as well. Some parents indeed, deliberately restrict their family to one in order to give him these superior advantages. Apart from any question of false values, there is no doubt that they can contribute much to the fundamental well-being of any child.

Whatever may be the theoretical joys of sharing, there is scarcely a child of four who wouldn't rather have a tricycle in exchange for the dumpling sister bouncing in her pram. Furthermore, the tricycle can certainly do more at the time for his general development than can his sister. The possession of it may make him a welcomed member of a group in which he can find deep satisfactions. Its loss may mean idle and frustrated afternoons when he cannot join in with the others.

The only child is often spared the humiliations of having to do without, of wearing handed down clothes, of hearing that 'we can't afford it'. His requests are at least listened to; in a large family, he may learn never to voice them. It is no wonder then, that he faces the world with a kind of cockiness, an assurance that much of what he wants will be his. This self-assurance will be of no mean value to him later on in a keenly competitive world!

Secondly, this material well-being often brings in its train an enriched environment. He brings home from school maybe a reference to Cardinal Wolsey, and on the first fine Saturday the family makes a trip to Hampton Court. He wants to take up photography, and mother helps to black out the boxroom so that he can develop his own films. Being read to, being helped, being shown things, being listened to—these are all his, and they are worth having. The cultural enrichment which follows as a result, often marks him out from the child of a large family who may be equally beloved, but whose interests must fit in with those of others, and if necessary, be subordinated to them.

Thirdly, and perhaps most important, the only child always stands to gain his full share of mothering. New

researches into human nature are still revealing fresh proof of the supreme importance of this factor in the individual's development. It is not the child who obtains too much love who is 'spoiled', but the child who has never received his full measure.

The child who feels himself rejected by the arrival of other children before he has been fully satisfied, may suffer acutely from anxieties which will gravely disturb his whole personality. The only child has this inestimable advantage—that he is the first and the last, and contrary to popular belief, this absolute security of relationship with his parents may well be the fruitful soil from which the sunniest natures spring.

It must be admitted however, that these advantages are theoretical. Indeed, many children of larger families may experience them while only children forfeit them because their parents, feeling that there is after all, 'only one' rebel at being hampered by so trivial a tie.

The only child is too frequently parked out at Granny's, or packed off to a friendly relation. He may be swept off extra early to bed if there is to be a party, or watch his parents go off arm-in-arm while he is left with the sitter-in. He may be paraded round art-galleries or toured across Europe, or sit through French films because the parents take a firm stand against giving up everything for one child and feel anyway that 'it's good for him'. Some of it may be good for him. What is not, is the very clear understanding he has that he's in the way. It is when this kind of thing happens that he is in truth, a 'lonely only'.

It is this charge of loneliness which heads the list of disadvantages from which the only child is said to suffer. It is obviously true that the most devoted parents

cannot supply their beloved child with the same stimulus as can the first grubby and inarticulate child he meets. How often one sees the dismal spectacle of only children trailing dispiritedly round the shops after two parents, or the equally dismal spectacle of two parents watching unenthusiastically their child at play on the beach! Every child needs other children from the moment he begins to toddle, and he needs them in variety and number for sound growth.

If once this fact is faced, the wise parent of an only child, will take steps to deal with it realistically. In these days of limited families, many parents are in the same boat, and the mother who sets out on her quest for playmates, will soon find fellow-seekers in all but the most isolated districts. She will find them in the nearest park or open space or public playground, and she will visit these with the firm determination of making friends. It means choosing a seat near other mothers with children of similar age and providing her own child with a toy over which contact can be made—a ball, or doll's pram, or spade and pail. It means exchanging friendly smiles with the mother as well as the child, so that out of it may come an hour's play. It means deliberately finding a railway compartment with another child in it, a table at a restaurant with other children, and being grateful even for a casual acquaintance that may begin and end on a journey or over a meal.

Above all, it means the liberal opening of the house door to the child's friends, without any qualms that they will make a mess or turn everything upside down—a decision made once for all, that we *want* our child to play with other children, and a realization that the natural place for them to play is in or near the home.

'Andy's coming in to-day for tea,' says Four Years pleasantly.

'I'm sorry he can't to-day,' replies Mummy amiably. 'I'm extra busy.'

'That's all right,' says Andy with the same good humour. 'We'll go into my place.' The significant point is that each child has come to accept home as a place for other children and this is far more important than waiting for formal invitations at this age.

If we tackle the problem in this way, we shall begin to suspect that this so-called disadvantage for the only child operates more frequently in practice for other children. There are far too many 'lucky' children subjected to the deadly monotony of play with brothers and sisters older or younger than themselves. Even a year's difference is considerable in the under-fives, and may make it difficult and unwise for two little children to play for long spells together.

We have all seen instances where a four-year-old habitually bullies her sister of two, or where a three-year-old is constantly frustrated because he cannot do what six years can. Indeed, it may fairly be said that children of the same family separated by a gap of say six or seven years, should be virtually regarded as only children and separate provision for companionship be made for each.

Where sex interests begin to diverge strongly as they do from about three years of age, it may become really painful for brothers and sisters to be forced to play together. Yet they are frequently expected to do so, because there aren't any other 'nice' children near—or even because two in the house is enough!

In real companionship then, the only child may in fact stand to gain. He numbers among his friends,

children from all kinds of backgrounds, instead of moving exclusively within the narrow limits of a family circle which he knows only too well. Again, a nursery class will give him rich experience of mixing with others, and when he is old enough, children's camps and hotels will provide more invigorating holidays than can the best of parents. No one would pretend that these contacts make up for the day-to-day social life, the give-and-take of the average family, but they are healthful and rich sources of companionship for the only child, and the wise parent will accept them with the thankful realization that *every* child has something to give hers which she herself cannot give.

For the only child who has enjoyed these freedoms, much of the argument about selfishness and not sharing, falls to the ground. 'I go first,' says the young guest, jostling his host in the doorway. 'I'm the visitor!'—'Well, I switch on the light, anyway,' retaliates the other, giving him a shove, but at least he concedes precedence on this occasion.

Selfishness is reduced to a low ebb by the unanswerable logic, plain enough to a three-year-old, 'It's no good asking Andy to come in, if you're not going to let him play with your toys.' Indeed, the very lack of playmates, often prompts a heightened sociability. 'Come and see my things. Let's play trains, shall we? You have this and I'll have that.'

Having everything, the only child may far more easily be encouraged to share than is the member of a family who has to protect his property against all comers. The injured cries of, 'Bob's got my gun! I know that's mine by the scratch on the handle!' persist long into adolescence. The easy family manners, 'I borrowed your red scarf last night. Do you mind?' develop

a friendly attitude far less often than is generally supposed.

These disadvantages as we have seen, may be turned into the opposite with wise handling. The third, which is less easily transmuted, is the amount of adult attention the only child gets. With him, it is always two against one, and if grandparents are near at hand, it may easily be more.

He is all we've got, and therefore we dwell on him. His wise sayings are cherished, his funny ones re-told, his rude ones instantly shushed. When he is good, he is very, very good, and when he is bad——! Everything he says and does is seen under a bright microscope. It is all terribly, terribly significant!

It is easily understandable that an only child very often becomes the focus of his parents' hopes. The father works after retiring age to give him a first-class career, the mother looks askance at prospective sons or daughters-in-law. They are bitterly disappointed or completely thrilled because he has failed or succeeded. He may, a stolid square peg, be screwed down firmly into a round hole because, 'I'd always determined my only son should follow (or not follow) in my footsteps.'

As the years pass, the burden of parents who exhaust him emotionally and fetter him materially, may become well-nigh intolerable, and then the phrase 'He's all we've got' becomes ominous indeed. He may then pay endlessly for the extra toys he had as a child and hear, while still a young man, the death-knell of his own hopes.

But this is only one side of the picture—though unfortunately, it is far from being unknown. The other side can show us the child, who, growing up so well-beloved, finds it easy to love in return and to extend to

many more the generous affection of his own home. Then he in turn will be able at last to experience family joys and to cherish them the more because for so long he was deprived of them. For such a child, parenthood may be a joyous fulfilment of which his own parents have sown the seed.

In dealing with the only child, careful discipline is needed, but it is discipline for the parents, rather than for the child. On the whole, the danger for him is that he gets too much indulgence or too much restraint. What he does not get enough of, is being ignored. We must forget that he is 'an only child', and remember that he is 'only a child', and give him time to grow and room to live.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Innocents Abroad

How shall we begin to train the young child?

As THE child grows, his attitudes to the people in his immediate environment change with his needs, and his demands on them are governed by the stage of development he has reached. The toddler who regarded his father as a tame bear to carry him round on his back, may look on him with a good deal less confidence ten years later when he brings home a mediocre report from school. And in later adolescence he may share games and talks with him as with an elder brother.

So his relationship to us and to other adult-figures varies from time to time. In his earliest years, he may fly to us for protection. At the close of childhood, he may try to shake us off, and in between these phases he may demand from us at all times the uttermost degree of sympathy, whether his confidences are tearful or triumphant.

A great many of our difficulties with our children arise because we do not take account of the dominant need of the moment, and fail to keep in step with the changing tempo of their lives. From the beginning, the child necessarily sets the pace, and if we want to keep him company, we must adapt ourselves to him rather than expect him to do so to us. For he can never because of his immaturity, catch up with our adult standards all the time without serious cost to himself.

It is therefore worthwhile to understand something of the trends of development in the average child, and to recognize consciously what he will expect of us and what he can give us as he grows.

For this reason, the last three chapters in this section are devoted to a consideration of three well-marked phases in the life of the child, each covering a considerable period and each presenting certain definite features. It is obvious that this will be far from presenting a full history of childish development, but it will offer three eras of importance from which a general survey may be made.

The first of these phases chronologically and also in significance for the ultimate welfare of the individual, is the period succeeding infancy, say from about one year to three—the age of the top-heavy wide-straddling toddler. Many psychologists have declared that this phase which begins when the child is leaving baby days behind him and ends as he becomes that competent little being of nursery school life, is the most difficult stage in all childhood to handle. Most adults who have survived the caring of children during this time, will wholeheartedly agree.

This is the stage when the child, screaming in fury, turns every head to look at him in the bus because he wanted to sit in a seat by himself and was plumped in his mother's lap—or vice versa. He it is who defies the efforts of strong men to raise him from the ground if he has decided he won't go another step. 'Mummy do it,' is his text, but he has no scruples in kicking her if she frustrates him. 'No!' is the most popular word in his vocabulary. He bursts into howls because Grandma cut his banana up and he wanted to hold it in his hand, —yet he gave no sign of what he wanted before the

operation! Battles are fought continually over the trivia of daily life, meals, toilet-training, washing and dressing, going out and coming in. Exasperating and irritating, incalculable and incomprehensible, his yet remains the most entertaining, the most appealing of all the ages of childhood, and for his wonder and delight in life, and for his fun and gaiety, we cannot find it in our hearts to deal seriously for long with him.

Yet he is a problem and no less of a problem because we are assured by commiserating friends that he will 'learn', will 'settle down', will 'behave' in time. He is a vital problem now, for on the way he does learn will largely depend the kind of individual he will grow up to be. It is now or never, and therefore it is of the utmost importance that we should consider carefully how best we are to bring him through this stage.

Every toddler is surely responsible for one thing: that first secret pang that every mother feels—'I can't manage my own child'—a pang to be felt at intervals in most parents' lives. Where is her cuddly baby who sat up in his pram, white and woolly, smiling at every passer-by with all eight teeth, whose most serious misdemeanour was a turning away of his head as the spoon touched his cheek? In his place, she is confronted by a tiresome toddler, unfailingly grubby in spite of dungarees, who won't play by himself for two minutes, follows her about the house as if tied on an invisible string, and is a past master at attracting the attention of the public to his mother's unkindness and inability to control him.

The most striking thing about the little child, perhaps the one thing round which crystallize all objections to him, is his capacity for obstruction expressed in active resistance. Why has he become thus transformed from the placid baby of only a few months ago?

Most mothers would sum the matter up in one exasperated word—'Temper!' or perhaps 'A naughty, wicked temper!' due possibly to an hereditary taint derived from his father's family, an evil desire to 'get the upper hand'. This obscure influence sweeps over the child like a sudden storm on every occasion when his slightest wish is thwarted—when he is refused an extra biscuit at tea or prevented from walking in the running gutter with his shoes on. These ever-hovering clouds blight the day and can make, for some mothers, even the spells of sunshine ominous. 'You wait till it's time for us to go home,' they say, watching him happily at play. 'Then there'll be a shindy.' . . . 'He won't like it when I tell him to come in. You watch!'

Of course the child has shown plainly his annoyance with us many times before this. From birth he has screamed at us when he was put to bed instead of being nursed, when he was kept waiting for his food, when he was taken out of his bath. But these rages were short-lived. Sleep came quickly to pacify him, and at the first drop of milk he forgot his misery.

The toddler is less open to suasion. He knows more clearly what he wants, goes more energetically towards his goal, and often refuses to be happy till he gets it. If the baby in his high chair picks up a knife from the table, he will willingly yield it if a teaspoon is offered in its place. The two-year-old is not so easily beguiled. He will clutch it fiercely and fight to retain it. For his will is emerging, and it is a vigorous and quickly-growing shoot.

Many parents do in fact realize this, though somewhat ruefully. 'He's got a will of his own,' they say. 'He certainly knows what he wants. You can't put him off now.' But in spite of this they are often concerned

primarily how to bend his will to theirs. This is the only solution as they see it.

But if children of this age could express their thoughts, they would surely declare that the greatest injustice done to them is that our tempers are taken (by us) as evidences of our 'strong will', 'knowing our own mind' and 'righteous indignation' whereas theirs are attributed to a vicious, if budding propensity which must be eradicated at all costs.

Not only then is the toddler impelled by the natural growth of his own will to accomplish his desires, but there are now far more things that he wants than he did as an infant. The needs of the baby are few, and fairly easily satisfied, but the needs, or rather the wishes of the toddler are endless, and these are largely the result of his new-found ability to move about by himself.

It is one of the ironies of life that the mother who waits with bated breath to see her child crawl, who pushes his chubby legs up behind him as he lies prone on the rug, who supports him under his arms and delights to see his bare feet down-thrusting the ground, soon and on many occasions regrets that he is no longer safely immobilized in his pram. He crawls 'like a streak of lightning', is 'quicker than you are' and immediately he is a newly released prisoner. He is free. He can go where he wills, and he wants to go everywhere.

It needs a sympathetic eye to see how intoxicating this tremendous achievement is. Toys lose their attraction for the time being. All that the toddler wants to do is to walk, and he will walk any adult off his feet if he will lend him a hand. At the most efficiently organized party he disdains paper hats, balloons and jellies. For him, there is nothing as entrancing as running out of the room and climbing a flight of stairs.

So with the gaining of his freedom, the child gains access to all manner of forbidden delights, the fire, the coal-scuttle, the head of the stairs, the door into the garden, and with these a corresponding list of prohibitions: 'No! . . . Naughty! . . . That's Mummy's. . . Put it down. . . Give it to Daddy. . . Come here. . . No!' For the first time, mother and child are in active conflict, and we cannot be surprised if he fights with all his might to retain the freedoms he has so hardly won.

Inevitably, since he has not also acquired the freedom of speech to any great degree, the fight must be carried out with the only means in his power—force. So he kicks, struggles, smacks, scratches and cries. He cannot argue or plead his case, or express why it is imperative he should have this or that. He retaliates in the only way he knows, and if we respond in the same way, he will fight desperately.

The situation then, is a condition of growth. It is true it is often recognized as such, and many parents go out to meet it with decision. 'It's now or never. . . . He's got to learn who's master. . . . If once he gets the upper hand. . . . You'll make a rod for your own back. . . .' Quite often the matter is tackled vigorously. A good smack or two . . . he'll learn. . . .

Unfortunately he doesn't learn quite as quickly as may appear on the surface. 'He never touched the gate again after that,' a mother will proudly report. No—but in all probability he did something else which also had to be smacked out of existence, or he substituted something far more annoying in its place—a refusal to eat, or to empty his bowel and bladder at the right time and in the right place. (These are the child's two chief weapons against the mother—not eating, and not

being clean and dry—and how often we place them in his hand!)

Punishment must be severe and prolonged if we are really to gain the 'upper hand' and when we have got it, what have we got? A child who has no will of his own, a child of whom we shall bitterly say in ten or fifteen years' time, 'Haven't you got a mind of your own? Can't you decide anything for yourself?' We have taken away the sturdy fibre of character, and left instead a reed shaken by the wind.

Alternatively, if we have been blessed with a high-spirited child, we shall reap a harvest of sulks that consume the vital energy and pave the way for the grown-up who is obstinate and obstructionist because he has never learned to yield graciously, who takes out his infantile spite against the world in constant rebellion.

This is a fearful price to pay and some people, recognizing it, have gone to the other extreme. He must not be frustrated at all costs—though we are frustrated because he rules the roost. He won't wear the overcoat we have bought, so we go without a new skirt to provide another. The whole house shivers because he insists on the back door being kept open. We miss the train because 'he just wouldn't come in'. We dare not answer the telephone because he was vociferating his demands. As an adult, he is insufferable, a tyrant on the hearth, shouting his decrees, slamming doors in fine frenzy—and at bottom, the uncontrolled toddler who was never denied.

What course then is open to us? There is only one in fairness to our children and to ourselves. We must begin by admitting the strength and urgency of his wishes. 'We're going down to get the meat now'—'I don't want to. I want to go on the swings.'—'Well, if we get ready

quickly, we'll be able to come round by the swings.' And if this fails, 'Do you know they are mending the road there? We might see the steamroller at work.' An alternative suggestion will often make such an errand more attractive, and a pleasant: 'Will you come with me?' will not be refused as often as a dogmatic, 'Come along in now. I want you!'

Time which has so little meaning for these children and often far too much for us, must be mutually adjusted. To work to schedule, to time the lunch for one o'clock, and five minutes before to call, 'Come on in now, and get your hands washed!' is an insult to a child who at that moment is in the middle of extensive building operations in the garden. But to wander down to him a quarter of an hour before, to survey the fortifications and admire them and then say, 'Well, I'm just getting the dinner ready. Will you finish that bit and then come in?' will alter the matter. If there is a refusal, a propitiating remark: 'How much more did you want to do?' will often provoke a most sensible reply. 'I just wanted to finish the wall up to there.' Then we can say handsomely, 'All right. I'll wait till then,' without feeling we have given way. Ten chances to one he will present himself five minutes late it is true, but smiling and satisfied.

A great deal of this early rebelliousness is fostered by our own tyrannical models of thought. We still want to have the absolute power over the toddler that we had over the infant. 'Come along at once. . . ! Did you hear what I said? . . . Don't you dare keep me waiting!' These phrases are so many gloves thrown down in challenge to the normal child and he is quick to pick them up. 'She does everything I tell her not to,' says a mother of her little daughter. 'Marie, don't

you dare climb those stairs!' The child immediately takes hold and starts to climb. 'There,' says the mother, '—you see?'

We need to keep in the forefront of our minds three things about the early treatment of children. First, they have to be taught that other people have wishes and wants as well as themselves, and they will only learn this fact if we give them frequent opportunity of experiencing their will and ours. This is the true age of innocence which sees the world ready and waiting to be exploited. These children are innocents abroad. If they err and offend, they do so at first because they know no guile, not because of original sin. If we are faithful with them, giving them their way when we can, and demanding ours when we can't, we shall be amazed at the rapidity and the grace with which they will accept our position.

'I'm sorry. I can't show you the book now. After tea, I will.' This kind of compromise will be unfailingly accepted if the child knows that it means something, that the book will be produced after tea. 'Andy's so reasonable,' said one mother enviously of another child. 'He listens when you talk to him.' Andy listens because he has learned that his mother's words have meaning. They are not chatter designed to put him off and distract his attention—a meaningless rattle: 'You don't really want that now. . . . Another time. . . . Not now. . . . Perhaps. . . . We'll ask Daddy.' It is this vague ramble that sends a young child whose urgent wishes need decisive settlement into frenzies, and makes him scream: 'But I do! I do want it now! I do!'

Secondly, we must be very sure that this meeting of the child on his own ground is a practical way of hand-

ling the situation not an avoidance based on our own lack of purpose. We shall willingly sacrifice our will to another—even if that other is our little child—because we know that thereby he will learn to sacrifice his will to ours. ‘I have helped you spring-clean your doll’s house. Now I want you to help me put the room tidy.’ We shall absolutely refuse to be drawn into battle, and obliterate the thought of victor and vanquished in differences of opinion. ‘I am sorry I can’t let you have an ice to-day. We bought some sweets, don’t you remember? Instead of being cross, let’s do some painting together.’ We shall always remember that we shall never teach a child to keep his temper by losing our own.

Thirdly, we must understand that what we are doing is not ‘managing a toddler’ but ‘bringing up a child’ to be an adult. As we have seen, our handling now will determine the future. The three-year-old who is out of hand will never ‘settle down’. Saul would never have thrown a javelin at his son if he had not harboured an evil spirit in his bosom for years. It is our task to help the child to prune his own imperious will so that it may make the sturdy growth of adult character, not to uproot it so that he is left defenceless against every wind that blows.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Golden Age

What are the special needs of the school child?

IF THE nursery years have been described as the age of innocence, those following it when the child has become well established at school, say the years from about seven to eleven, have been surely well-named the golden age. At no other time of his life is the child so completely free to enjoy himself. He has escaped the strict supervision of a year or two ago and as yet he has not reached the 'shades of the prison house' nor has any need to trouble himself about the momentous question of 'what he is going to do in life'. As a consequence, at no other time is he so easy and delightful to handle.

There are a number of reasons for this blissful state. The golden years are first of all, usually peak years of physical health. The child has come through the stresses of measles, mumps and chickenpox, and has not yet fallen a victim to the lethargy, the greensickness of adolescence. He is possessed as his elders know all too well, of an unflagging energy which keeps him on his feet from morn till night.

Some of us indeed, find this outstanding characteristic somewhat difficult to tolerate. The girls seem to be tomboys and the boys hooligans, and we wish they would be a bit more ladylike or sensible and settle down and play something nice and quiet. But how much more

attractive this abundant life is than the indolence which so often descends on the boy and girl of thirteen! Two or three years later, we shall be nagging the high-spirited ten-year-old for his laziness!

These young children are bursting with life, and they need plenty of opportunity especially after school where they have been confined, to run and jump and tussle and wear themselves out. It is good to let them chase their own tails like puppies and even perhaps to be thankful that the borough council is not proceeding just yet with the great housing scheme, since the derelict site provides a happy hunting ground for these youngsters.

Further, these are also years of blossoming self-confidence, during which the last vestiges of clinging to mother typical of the nursery years, fade away. The school child is able to deal with the minor emergencies of life on his own. A cut knee is treated by a quick wipe over with a dirty handkerchief, not by running indoors howling for help. If he is lost, he asks his way or presents himself to a policeman. If he comes home unexpectedly and finds mother is out, he will get himself something to eat and be off again. This is the stage of life when a nice cup of tea with Auntie, or even a visit to the pictures with Mother is rightly laughed to scorn, and the wise parent will admit the child's urge to be up and doing with his fellows instead of trailing off with her as he did a year or two ago.

Adults in fact, to children of this age, diminish to their proper stature. They are no longer the striding giants of the nursery world, or the jealous guardians of privilege with whom the adolescent crosses swords. They are judged on their ability to supply wants, pocket money and cardboard, food and a handy work-

box, and they are used by the children as they were meant to be used.

The librarian is interviewed. 'Will you tell me a good book to read? I've read——' and they will be specific in describing their literary tastes. 'Let's ask a policeman. He'll know !' and the suggestion is instantly acted upon. They approach the uniformed servants of the public, museum curators, bus conductors, park keepers and railway officials as man to man. 'Will you tell us? . . . What's that for? . . . Are there any more models that work beside these? . . .' They carry their teachers along on the fast-flowing stream of their interests instead of being pushed and pulled by them: 'What are we going to do this afternoon? . . . Can we make lots of these? . . . Can we get up a play on our own? . . . I've got an idea . . .'

Consequently, their relationship with adults is often the most harmonious in all the years of childhood. Visiting friends find it easy to make contact with them and enjoy their universal *bonhomie*. But as we have seen, children of this age bestow their favours more freely on their fellows. For real enjoyment, for the serious business of life, they turn to their playmates, and it is now above all when they prefer to go about in gangs, finding in the group the stimulus they need to act out their vigorous fantasy life.

For these tough-looking little boys and girls have not yet left the world of faery behind them, though they have long since discarded story books of talking bunnies and flower fairies. They have given up chuffing their trains round the floor, are ashamed to be seen wheeling a dolls' pram, and are off on harum-scarum adventures. You see them taking pot-shots at one another over suburban hedges of golden privet, dropping down dead

with horrid groans, bursting out on the captor who is tying a maiden to a lamp-post with her own skipping rope, and crying 'Stick 'em up!' The maidens themselves run shrieking with the pack, imploring to be captured.

If the streets are banned, they plead to camp down the bottom of the garden in a home-made tent, and prefer bread and sardines to a nice hot dinner served on plates indoors. They elect to hatch their mysterious plots in an icy garage or a lumber room, favourite rendezvous for the forming of secret societies and the swearing of dreadful oaths.

Instead then, of expecting these children to have one selected friend indoors to play in a civilized manner every evening, we should aid and abet them in their frolics—pack them up hearty lunches to go off picnicking for the day, provide them with a shilling or so to explore their native town, and make the classic trips to the Zoo, the Museums and Madame Tussaud's on their own.

Another characteristic of these children which we should surely look benignly on and very rarely do, is their lively imagination. They do not need, though alas, it is often rammed down their throats, ready-made adventure on radio, on TV and cinema. It is all in their heads, gathered from story and picture and hearsay.

It is easy to ridicule their make-believe, to feel that now they are out of the nursery, they should leave childish things behind them—but they are children still, and their imagination is far more vivid and more daring than it was in pre-school days. In a year or two, we shall be pouring scorn on them because they are preoccupied with mundane things, because Bob refuses

to wear shorts any longer, and Angela demands lipstick!

These games, though perhaps they shock us by their crudity or annoy us by their tumult, mean something to them and are necessary at their stage of development. These miniature forays of Red Indian against Cowboy, police against gangsters, bring out qualities of leadership and daring, skills of jumping and running, hiding and catching. They teach a child to overcome his fears, to co-operate with others, to take orders and give them—in short, to live with others. As such, they have a value distinct from indoor games which he must play on his own. Only if children are allowed to run through this phase, will they 'settle down' in due time, at peace with the world and themselves because they have had their fling.

It is up to us to make this fling a joyous one. We can be generous at little cost to ourselves in providing dressing-up clothes, the riding breeches we hoped to wear again, the Eastern hanging once splendid and now perished. We can hand over the feathers and ribbons of old hat trimmings and the tarnished 'jewellery' we have discarded. We shall make ourselves available as stitchers of Indian head-dresses and alteration hands, stack the tools in the woodshed to provide headquarters for the gang—and never omit to knock when we want the lawn-mower, and never, never laugh at the projects confided to us.

Experience and wise judgment have long since recognized the spate of energy, and the desire to mix with others which characterize this stage of childhood, and made use of these trends in the formation of all kinds of official clubs. Before this stage, the child needs the adult too much to be willing to co-operate for long with

children of his own age. But now, he can be moulded into the ideal group-member. He can join the Wolf Cubs, Sea Scouts, Boys' Brigades and the like, and his sister will enjoy the girls' branches of these activities.

Groups like these have an advantage over the 'secret societies' which these children will form if left on their own, in that these are supervised and some supervision is desirable to curb the element of daring which is so strong at this age. Too many of these children get into mischief because they really do not know what they are doing. They find illegal ways down to the canal, or trespass into private property.

Moreover, the trained leaders of such clubs can harness the imagination and energy more usefully. Working for badges, competitive games and branch activities, not only give the child useful knowledge, but supply him with an incentive he would hardly find for himself. Lastly, the experienced club-leader watches out for the individual, tempers the bully, and encourages the timid. Left to themselves private gangs send so often the weakest to the wall, while the aggressive youngster rules the roost for ever and aye.

If we want our children to learn to live with others, to expand their selfish enjoyment into the joy of doing something for a group, we cannot do better than encourage them to join one of these clubs. It is in fact, better for a child of this age to be a member of a gang than a lone wolf.

It is clear that the child who, in the nursery years has learned to get on with others, who has learned to give and take in the family circle and yet has been allowed to preserve his own personality inviolate, comes into his own in the golden age. The child who rides roughshod over his doting parents will meet his match among

children of his own age. His determination to play only the game he wants and the part in it he chooses, will soon be dealt with. He will be ruthlessly 'crossed out of the gang', and only be readmitted when he has humbly consented to be the least of the cowboys. Similarly the namby-pamby will find scant welcome till he has proved by a scuffle or two that he can stand on his own feet.

When we are discussing children we so often give special attention first, to the under-fives, and then to the adolescents,—the two groups who present us with some obvious difficulty. The years between make their own demands on us, and because these are not as burdensome as those made by the little ones and the older boys and girls, there is perhaps all the more reason for bearing them also in mind, and joining heartily in spirit with their joys.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

'Where the Brook and River Meet'

How can we best deal with the adolescent?

THE ADOLESCENT is not usually the most popular of our children. Many parents of older boys and girls look back nostalgically to the days when their offspring were small and cuddly, or a bit older and so amusing. Many teachers fight shy of them, preferring to stick to the younger children who present fewer problems of discipline. General opinion has it that children 'are all right while they're young'—that is, when they can be kept firmly in their proper place, but that adolescence is an awkward age to be got through somehow because it will miraculously transform the child into an adult. Indeed, it might be true if reprehensible for many of us to acknowledge that while we love our adolescent children, we do not like them!

The main reason for their unpopularity is of course, the many forms of trying behaviour they exhibit. At home, they are frequently rude and antagonistic, their rebellion accompanied by the monotonous refrain, 'I'm not a kid any longer . . . You're not going to order me about.' They are notably lacking in hospitality towards the family's visitors, ('Oh, is she coming here again? I'm going out!') or grace such an occasion with blushes and giggles and a complete absence of light conversation.

At school, when we feel they should be putting on a

spurt and showing some direction in their interests, they are frequently dilatory, day-dream, scamp their homework, loll in the desks and change plans for their future from month to month.

In public, they are often cordially detested, especially in numbers. No one who has travelled home by train or bus which picks up a load of secondary school pupils will forget the experience of such an invasion—the pushing and scrambling, the shouting and calling, the pulling off of caps and the tugging of hair, the ferreting for bubble gum and apples—the careless and wholesale appropriation of the public vehicle. Even in later adolescence, this assumption of priority is scarcely shaken. One may recall a recent and typical occasion when university students having catcalled their chosen guest speaker off the platform told a reporter artlessly: 'It was only a joke. We didn't think he'd mind. . . .'

This is admittedly an overdrawn picture and it may be countered by individual examples where the opposite is the case, where teenagers are modest, helpful, polite and anxious to please. Nevertheless, the darker side is one which many adults have experienced, and as a result, they find this stage of childhood the most vexing, and perhaps the most intimidating to handle. Even those who have found these older boys and girls 'little trouble' have done so because they walk warily round the situation and avoid understanding them just as they avoid misunderstanding them.

This is a pity, for adolescence has its own charm and even inspiration for older people, as its constant treatment by writers and artists witnesses. Getting to know these teenagers can be fascinating, and leading them through these years is rewarding in a way that only those who have worked closely with them will know. To

parents, they should make a special appeal for it is at this time that the child is either drawn more closely back into sympathy with them, or virtually severs himself from them. In adolescence, he makes his last, perhaps his most poignant appeal to us for understanding, and if we fail him now, he will inevitably turn elsewhere.

If therefore, we are in earnest to do the best we can for these older children as we are for the little ones, we shall try to understand first of all, why they do react sometimes so inexplicably, so crudely towards us. The kernel of the answer lies in the physical changes which are so striking at this time and which transform boy and girl into man and woman. It is inevitable that such dramatic bodily development should be accompanied by a corresponding mental development. The adolescent comes out in a rash of new interests and desires as he often comes out in a rash of spots.

Chief of these, and first and last, is his desire for independence. The mirror tells him he is no longer a child and if he is developing normally, he has no intention of being treated like one. He wants to stay out late, not because like a little child he doesn't want to go to bed, but because he wants the key of the door and not to be told what time to come in. Nor does he want to be asked where he has been or told how to spend his money or what clothes to wear. He may volunteer information on all these points but he reserves the right to withhold it.

Next, his maturing body directs his attention to himself, and for the first time he begins to assess himself as an individual. He realizes that he is good-looking, or more commonly, hopelessly ugly. Leo Tolstoy spoke once for all for the adolescent on this point, revealing

its vital importance to the child in unforgettable words: 'I had moments of despair at my ugliness, for I thought that no human being with such a large nose, such thick lips and such small grey eyes as mine, could ever hope to attain happiness on this earth. I used to ask God to perform a miracle by changing me into a beauty, and would have given all I possessed, or even hoped to possess to have a handsome face.'

But this is only the beginning of a deeper self-awareness which leads him to a more accurate estimation of his personal abilities and what he wants to do with them. The girl knows that she is bound for a university and reviews possible careers in this light, the boy that he has a particular skill in carpentry which gladly makes him decide to work at it.

Very often it is true, these hopes glow with a light that never was on sea or land. The boy is going to be a doctor, but not an ordinary G.P., and he will spend hours decorating the covers of his books with his name followed by every known medical degree. The girl is to take up ballet seriously but only, be it understood, because she will become *prima ballerina assoluta*.

For many adolescents, life is a seesaw. Alternately they see themselves in the future as embittered ugly old maids (or the male counterpart), eking out a meagre existence in some humdrum job, or on the other hand, distinguished and courted through the length and breadth of the land. No wonder the story of Cinderella has an appeal for men and women alike! It is because of this lamentable uncertainty over the self—'Am I a fool, or am I just misunderstood?' that the adolescent needs desperately the appreciation of those adults who are said to know better than he does.

But this is not all. The new searchlight does not only

turn inward and reveal the self to the child. It also—and to some it may seem more often—turns outward on the home and on the people in it, and these take on a new and dreadful clarity. Mother is no longer the good, and wise and beautiful being of nursery days. She is a little woman, dowdy and often bad-tempered and quite old-fashioned. Father is by no means as clever, brave and strong as he was once thought to be. He is round-shouldered and has been in the same job without conspicuous success for thirty years, and he, it goes without saying, is also old-fashioned. The house is shabby, and the street is poor and the town is dull and the nation is decadent. To leave home, to strike out for one’s self, to be one’s own master, to reform the world, to make everybody listen, to count for something, in short to have the responsibilities which only youth can tackle—this again is an urge which drives the growing child forward to stake his claim. ‘Home, sweet home!’ was not written nor ever sung with any fervour by an adolescent!

We may pause here to note that in cultures more primitive than our own, many of these new and difficult attitudes do not arise for the simple reason that at puberty boys and girls are given full adult status. They marry and become heads of their own households, and thus achieve at a blow their envied independence and the satisfaction of their natural desires.

It is clear that the lot of the average teenager in our society is not an enviable one, but understanding why these children are difficult is only half the problem and to many adults may seem the less important half. What really is of moment is how to deal with these attitudes for the children’s well-being and ours.

The first thing to admit from the heart, is that we

shall never deal with them successfully until we grant the rights of growing children to their changing views. To counter them by constant reminders of their immaturity and dependence: 'You're not going to do just as you like . . . I don't want any of your airs and graces . . .' is to intensify their hostility and with reason. The hour has struck when we must allow them more and more to do as they like, and to help them to wear the airs and graces which nature has bestowed on them at this age.

We shall therefore try to handle these children even more flexibly than we did in their younger days, not setting up barriers and saying: 'Thus far and no farther!' For the tide is coming in, and we cannot stop it even if we would.

So we shall do what we can to give them increasing measures of the independence they crave and which is their right. Luckily their demands do not burst into full bloom overnight. They have been growing since the child was born, but now they assume more specific forms. One of the most important of these at this, or perhaps any, age, is to have money of one's own, to spend as one pleases.

Some of these young people may be wage-earners, and if we are on good terms with them we may arrive in friendly discussion and with pencil and paper at a reasonable division of the pay packet. For these, and for those who are still dependent on parental charity fair pocket money is a prime necessity to be spent as the owner decides. Few people ever see eye to eye on the spending of income, and there is little reason why we should approve our children's waste of money on going to the pictures, buying a magazine or a new handbag. But we must stand back and trust to the early training

we have given them or to the harsh lessons of being temporarily penniless to curb their desire to spend rashly. There is every reason why we should encourage the earning of money by the boy and girl who are still at school if it means that thereby they can mix more freely in the pastimes of their fellows. They will not be beholden to us for every penny, and the discipline of doing a job faithfully as errand boy or baby-sitter will be valuable training.

Again, in the matter of clothes—another point of importance particularly with girls, the adolescent should be allowed considerable freedom of choice. If we have discussed as woman to woman, fashion and taste, and from early days have encouraged a child to express her likes and dislikes without: ‘You’ll have what I want. I’m paying for it!’ we need not tremble at the girl’s first excursions into buying for herself. The chances are that she will ask our advice before setting out, and be more ready to be satisfied with what she has bought.

At no other age is the need of a room of one’s own so vital to a realization of one’s growing up, and if this is not possible, there should be an obvious re-arrangement of furniture to give the older child a part of a room to himself, together with a cupboard or chest fitted with a lock where he may keep the things he regards as strictly private.

These concessions to our growing children in material things, so trivial on the whole for us to make, will be appreciated by them as visible signs that the family is at last taking them seriously—the thing above all that they want. They will pave the way for more friendly discussion on other points of freedom which rankle with both parent and child, associating with certain friends, keeping late hours, wearing make-up and

adopting alien speech and manner. The child will be encouraged to put forward his point of view and give an ear to a contrary opinion, and in such talk an amicable compromise will often be made.

In nothing are we adults more wanting perhaps, than in our neglect to show our appreciation of these older children. If we do admire them, we are often silent fearing that we shall give them swollen heads. If we don't, we are quick to let them know, feeling that the time has come to make such matters plain: 'It's about time you pulled yourself together . . . a big boy like you . . . a great girl . . . I'm ashamed of you . . .'

We need to overcome our shyness in the expression of our affection for these children, to say easily to them as we would to a close friend: 'That blue frock is exactly right for you . . . You look really smart to-day—I'm glad we're going out . . . You did that better than ever I could have done it—that's a real gift of yours . . .' Even more valuable will be our very sincere interest in their pursuits, and we shall attend all speech days, applaud heartily at all performances of school plays, listen devotedly to accounts of their efforts in the debating society and at football, and extend the same passionate interest in their achievements as we did when they were two and lisping their first words.

Above all, we can extend a tactful sympathy to the problems that loom so large. To say to a girl: 'As you grow older, you'll get slimmer—it's only puppy fat,' and to a boy, 'I'll give you a good lotion for those spots,' to listen to the difficulties of the first job or the apprehensions of exams—these are all ways in which we can show our unchanged love for our older children.

Lastly, we should bestow on the adolescent respon-

sibilities as privileges rather than as chores. Many of these children are helped enormously at school to forget their new self-consciousness and to develop their growing powers of decisions by being made prefects. We can often in the home, work along these lines, not by shelving on to them the disagreeable jobs which we are so tired of, but by delegating part of our authority. To say to a younger child: 'You must ask Ann if she'll make biscuits for Sunday tea,—you know that's her job,' or 'Bob will find you a screw for your bike—he's our handyman,' will give the big sister or brother reason for preening themselves. We shall find that if these tasks are regarded as their contribution to the home and proclaimed as such instead of merely helping us out, that many of these children will begin to find joy in seeing a job well done, and will draw attention to the piles of chopped wood, and the daintily arranged cakes.

Interest in this kind of service for others is naturally increased if it benefits in an obvious way, the doer. The teenager may be invited to arrange her own birthday party, choosing the menu and thinking out the programme. Friends will be welcome on the understanding that the preparation and clearing up are left to the hostess and her guests. In this way the adolescent learns that independence cannot be granted without responsibility following in its wake—a fact he would often like to ignore. Angela is at liberty to buy the organdie blouse, if she will look after the laundering of it. Bob can go on the cycle rally if he will get himself up and off at the crack of dawn.

We shall expect these children to claim a larger share in family discussions, to help choose the new wallpaper and offer suggestions for the annual holiday, and we shall be even willing to consider their critical estimate

of the way we are running things. A remark like, 'Why don't you do something about your hair Mother?' should send us in silence to the mirror, instead of drawing from us reprimands on their rudeness. While we might wish they would grow in tact as rapidly as in perception, we shall yet be willing to recognize their growing maturity and as such, take their comments in good faith.

Finally, we need to keep constantly in mind this fact : most of us remember the time when we were preparing for our first baby, when only the best was good enough. We determined on the best because we wanted to welcome the baby wholeheartedly. Twelve years later or thereabouts, we have to welcome the child again into the family circle, this time as an adult, and we shall not surely be any more sparing of ourselves now, than we were then.

PART III

The Child in Himself

What goes on inside the child? How does he think and feel? What problems trouble him and how can we deal with them so that they do not issue in problems for us?

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Fear Comes First

What can we do to help the child overcome his fears?

IN THIS last section, we have now to consider the heart of the subject, the child himself as he moves through the world, an individual distinct from all other individuals and freed of outside pressure.

Many of us watching the play of expression on our children's faces, must often have felt: 'I wonder what he's thinking?' or when he has said something we do not understand, have thought: 'I wish I knew what was going on in his head!' Many of us too have undoubtedly asked ourselves at some sudden piece of inexplicable behaviour: 'Why on earth does he go on like that?'

The child's ability to enlighten us is limited. His command of language is rarely equal to his needs. How often do we ourselves say, 'I wish I could express what I mean!' We must piece together the fragments we have, the half-spoken words, the gestures, the reaction of face or body to make as complete a picture as we can of our own child, and the more sympathetically we observe, the greater the number of fragments we shall retrieve.

Fortunately for us perhaps we shall soon find that the extraordinary behaviour of our child is in fact extremely common. He shares his humanity with the rest of mankind and we shall never find that the problems he

sets us are unique. So the following chapters deal with various behaviour problems which affect most children whatever their background.

First among these in the sense that it is present in obvious degree in every individual is the problem of fear. Most mothers want their children to be brave, and feel annoyance and even shame when their own child deserts a group of boisterous youngsters, and runs howling to their skirts. 'Oh go away! Don't be such a baby!' is a common reaction at such times, and one may feel sympathy with the mother's impatience. Quite often the danger is imaginary or trivial, and she feels the child must learn to stand on his own feet and not fly to her for protection.

Courage is universally admired, but it is not only this fact which makes our attitude to childish fears frequently an intolerant one. We may feel Ann is being stupidly hysterical to scream when Mrs. Blank's effusive Airedale jumps up to lick her face. We know that he won't hurt her, and our irritation with her is because she refuses to know it too, however much we tell her that he's only friendly. But a little thought on our part would soon make us realize that when you yourself are only three feet high, a large woolly beast who stands on his hind feet as tall as yourself and is able to leap and run far better than you can, is not to be met with indifference.

Yet this little thought is strangely and sadly lacking in many adults. A child who has had a nasty tumble from a tricycle, or tripped over a step is quite commonly pulled to his feet and slapped with the admonition, 'Look where you're going, will you?' Yet every one of these reproving adults would acknowledge the shock of fear that sends them 'cold all over' at similar mishaps.

In the majority of cases, we simply do not give time to think how differently these incidents appear to little children who inhabit a world peopled for the most part, with giants and gigantic objects whose workings they cannot possibly understand.

If we were to practise the habit of looking at the things which make children react in fear through the eyes of a child, our whole attitude to the problem of nervousness, timidity, babyishness or whatever we like to term it, would change fundamentally. We should rescue terrified Ann from the unwelcome attention of the Airedale, try to restrain the dog sufficiently to receive a timid pat from her hand, and wait for future occasions to prove to her that he only wants to be friends.

There is however, a further reason why our children's fears exasperate us which is less usually understood. It is that we ourselves are often afraid, sometimes of the very same things which terrify our children, and their open display of fear recalls too painfully the efforts we make to control our own. A great number of adults are, for example, equally afraid of the dark, and we may all recall in this connection how much greater the public fear was of night-raids than of those that took place in the daylight. Yet in fact, these latter were often equally dangerous.

We do not express our fears so openly because of a control we have been forced to learn through the years. Moreover, we understand more of the workings of the world—we *know* there are no bogeymen. Lastly, but by no means least, we can put on the light when we please!

Many of us share our children's fears of dogs, cows, and add to these fears which do not generally touch children—fears of worms and spiders for example. Our

child's open confession of his fears touches too nearly our own weakness in the matter.

Yet it is difficult to understand really why we should feel so guilty and ashamed of what is, after all, the instinct to preserve the self from possible harm. If we were not afraid of sudden noise or light, unknown shapes and sounds, we should, long before our childhood had passed, have succumbed to very real dangers. Running away, covering the eyes, shielding the head are defensive movements: they are not cowardly.

Fear is therefore, a condition of our humanity, and it is also a condition of our survival. Nevertheless, life demands that we should not run away on every occasion or at every threat, and it is part of our growing up to learn to keep these fears in check even though we cannot uproot them. And it is right to want to educate our children in this as in other praiseworthy attitudes.

It is unfortunate that on the whole we tend to hurry the young child too much in the matter, but understandable enough. Just as we spur on the baby to let go and walk alone, and the nursery child to read before he goes to school, so we want him to be brave before his time. But Nature here, as so often, is against us, warning the child not to take too many risks, to go slowly, to test and re-test, until he is strong enough to protect himself.

How often we see a solitary child being exhorted to 'Go and play with the little boy over there,' to 'Come and shake hands with Uncle Tom' and particularly, to 'Leave go' of his mother's hands. 'Don't be so silly! I'm ashamed of you!'

But the child's nature warns him to observe the little boy and Uncle Tom carefully first, and in the meantime, not to let go of Mummy's hand at all costs. Not

only therefore, are such exhortations valueless, but they fill the child with additional anxiety. Mummy doesn't want to hold his hand in his moment of peril, she doesn't understand how he feels, and he is making her angry and cannot help it.

It is easy to see then, how such well-meant admonition on the part of the adult, defeats its own ends. The child now has increased fears to deal with, and it is inevitable that such children should take longer to 'grow out of it' than children who are allowed to develop at their own pace.

We shall often find that children who are forced into situations which are really frightening for them, will accept them because they cannot do otherwise. Then they will transfer their fears on to other things. A mother reported proudly that her boy of three would go anywhere without her—go out to tea with other people, be left in the house in charge of a strange 'sitter-in', attend nursery school without a qualm. All this was true. The child had made one or two 'scenes' at first, but now 'didn't mind'.

In fact, observation showed that this child at five years of age, was eaten up with all kinds of fears. He voiced persistently his fear of going home in the dark, even though he was to be escorted, was terrified of tube trains that travel 'in a tunnel', and was convinced all dogs would bite. No amount of reassurance could dispel these fears. Outwardly tough, he was at heart, a-tremble, and was in reality far more nervous than many outwardly clinging children of his age.

The onlooker may deprecate the policy of the mother who believes in protecting her child as long as he needs it. Many husbands and wives wrangle on the question of a night-light for the child who pleads so

piteously for one. 'Don't molly-coddle him! He's got to get over it!' decides the 'stronger' parent, and the child is left to cry till scoldings or exhaustion put a stop to it. The stern lawgiver is gratified at the silence and congratulates himself on his firmness. Yet how many adults can recall with a vividness which proves the tremendous impression of those early experiences, the torment of the dark and lonely hours when they lay shuddering under the bedclothes, enduring their misery alone!

It is surely significant that each one of these adults is still afraid of the dark! No. There is no 'getting over' the problem of fear in this way, and the 'soft' mother who leaves the bedroom door ajar so that some reflected light and human sound can reach the child in his isolation, is helping her child most certainly forward to the day when he will say of his own accord, 'I don't need a light any longer, Mummy. I'm a big boy now.'

Every adult in contact with the child can actively help him to overcome his fears, and among these, the mother is of course, the most influential. Many mothers do not realize how effective is their own attitude in influencing their children in this way. The mother who betrays her own fears in any emergency by crying out, wringing her hands, lamenting, is communicating fearfulness. A mother who asked for advice in the case of her boy who was terrified of thunderstorms, and confessed that when one occurred she got into bed and trembled with him, was scarcely going the right way about the problem!

The mother who can outwardly at least, remain serene and force herself not to tremble and to speak calmly, will encourage the child to face danger, pain and distress with fortitude. This was shown strikingly during the war, when young children were relatively

impervious to the frightening effects of guns and bombs so long as the mother apparently ignored the fury. Children of an hysterical mother however, anticipated the raids and endured them with the anguish of the adult who knows what such events might mean.

It follows then, how very much the mother can influence her child in facing the innumerable ordeals of life—the first visit to the sea, to the dentist, to hospital, to school—even to such trifling things (to us) as the fitting of a new pair of shoes. The semi-humorous approach of the hearty adult is as much to be deprecated as the ‘No nonsense now!’ brigade.

‘Come on in with me! It’s lovely!’ shouts the ten-stone gold medal swimming mother to the shivering mite facing the mighty ocean. ‘You wait till you get to school!’ warns an exasperated parent off and on through the two years preceding that day of judgment. ‘I’ll give you to a policeman!’ threatens another. These very parents are the ones who cannot understand how they have bred such whining ‘can’t-say-boo-to-a-goose’ children.

Mothers can go a long way in preparing their children to face any ordeal. A clear and simple explanation of what is going to happen is often possible, and can be repeated patiently from time to time beforehand always followed by the reassurance, ‘But Mummy will be there, or waiting for you, or will come for you.’ To this may be added for children of many ages, the playing out of the situation—rehearsals which fill out the explanation and bring the idea within reach of the child. A first visit to the dentist for example can be robbed of its terrors if the child has played at sitting in a chair with his head back and his mouth open while Mummy inspects his teeth with a tiny mirror—in this

case an egg spoon. Similarly he can pretend to stand in a pedascope so that the shoe-fitter can see his feet, or bare his arm to have an injection.

The value of these rehearsals is increased if the roles are reversed and the child is allowed to be the powerful adult sometimes, while Mummy is the patient, for in playing, the awful mysteries are reduced to the safe proportions of the known.

Pre-visits are worthwhile too—watching children at play in the school playground, watching Mummy have her teeth done and her shoes fitted, watching children in bed on the hospital veranda.

These concessions to the child's problem of fear are commonsense. They are based on an understanding of the child mind, and the adult who is willing to make them, shows his appreciation of the child's littleness and weakness. This appreciation has nothing in it of contempt, but is full of love, and the child who is thus handled in his earliest years will be soundly constituted to face any ordeal before him, for 'perfect love casteth out fear'.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Fight For Life

How far should children be allowed to be aggressive?

EMINENT PSYCHOLOGISTS in America studying the behaviour of the new-born, have asserted in recent years that only two emotional reactions are present at birth. The first is fear, which we have already discussed; the other, rage. Though at first this declaration may seem to reduce things to the barest minimum, every mother will have observed for herself the readiness of the infant to start at every new sound or movement, and equally his readiness to protest at the slightest provocation.

It is this rage, this instinct to fight for one's self which we call aggression and which lies so near the surface of all human behaviour. Its value for the survival of the individual is obvious. 'An infant crying in the night, And with no language but a cry' can effectively recall the most neglectful mother to her duty.

The crying and struggling of the baby attract attention, but as he grows older, he learns to make his protest more effective. A year-old child will allow an older one to take a toy out of his hand, and scarcely seem to realize he has lost it. A year later, he will run away in an effort to avoid its being taken, but six months after that, he will attempt to hit his opponent, and if that fails will run off crying to get extra help.

As the years go on, his aggression manifests itself in different ways according to the stage of development

which he has reached. We are all familiar with the tantrums of the toddler which may be expressed by lying on the ground, screaming, biting, scratching and kicking. In due time this passes into the bouts of fist-cuffs between young boys and among girls, into the more refined but perhaps more obnoxious forms of name-calling, sneering, tale-telling and so on. When the adversary is too powerful, as in the case of parents and teachers, aggression finds an outlet in forms less overt but more irritating, such as muttering under one's breath, sulking, or carrying out a request as badly as possible.

The precise form aggression takes depends very largely on the temperament of the individual. A group of young children with whom Four Years plays, exhibit forms determined primarily by the physical prowess of each child. The bigger and stronger children will hit or push the others. One not so robust will slink up and destroy a cherished sandcastle and dart off again. Yet another relies on strength of will to persuade the others to gang up against one unfortunate until the whole group is chanting in unison, 'Silly old Patrick!' Patrick meanwhile, who has little crude strength, gets his own back by sucking an ice-lolly and makes the others suffer in a different way. Another who is rejected, will retreat to a safe distance and hurl verbal taunts that sting more than blows. 'You'll get germs playing with that sand! My Daddy's going to take me to the airport!'

Environmental factors too, influence the form of aggression each child makes his own. The boy who has a big brother is more likely to land out with his fists at an early age than the one who is brought up with a family of girls. The parents' attitude is of course, of

first importance, and it is easily understood that advice such as, 'Stand up for yourself! Hit him back!' is more readily acted upon than pacific suggestions like, 'Don't be rough! That's unkind!' simply because the former appeal to the child's urge to protect himself.

These varied forms of behaviour, show how inevitable it is that aggression should find an outlet, and indeed how necessary if the individual is to survive at all. The smallest child early learns the best way for him to protect himself against others. Even cajolery and bribing are forms of aggression when they serve this purpose.

The problem of aggression is indeed, a very real one, but it is important to realize at the outset, that the child *needs* to be aggressive, to assert himself and his wishes, to protest and be violent just as adults do. We must therefore make provision for the expression of such emotion at every stage of his development. It serves little purpose for example, to exhort the child continually to 'Play quietly! Be friends!' and to observe smugly, 'Gentlemen don't do that!' when he thrusts himself in front of a little girl. A blow now and again between friends, a toy snatched or a nose punched, is no more out of place when one is four than is an exchange of repartee when one is forty.

'Well then, I won't be your best friend!' says Four Years with finality after a disagreement, and ten seconds later with manifest glee, 'I know. Let's play tractors!' He needs to quarrel to see the uselessness of it, to realize that projects depend upon peace. He needs to knock down his bricks noisily just as we need to work off our fury by spring-cleaning viciously. He needs to scold Teddy because he cannot scold effectively the adult who holds the reins.

The question now arises, how far should the adult

interfere in childish quarrels. Generally speaking, the less the better. A watchful eye to see that a squabble does not get out of hand, a ready step to prevent Bobby bringing his spade edgewise down on Jim's head—these are part of everyday supervision. But lecturing on the Christian virtues of playing nicely and quietly, sharing, not being selfish, taking turns and so on, are best abandoned in favour of an occasional practical suggestion. John will part up with his conductor's hat willingly, if he sees that he has created Peter thereby driver of his bus. The solitary tricycle will be amicably shared if the other is given the prestige of directing the traffic.

Interference of a more radical nature may be called for, and will be justified, if it is obvious that one child is being victimized by a group. There are children who, because of some inherent timidity, are recognized by their fellows as ideal scapegoats. It is interesting, and distressing, to see such a child arrive to play, full of anxiety and hope, and within minutes the group which was playing constructively is in the middle of planned attack on him.

It is useless to attempt reformation in these cases. To ask the others, 'Why are you so nasty to David? Why can't he play?' produces nothing but half-shamefaced giggles and sidelong looks. The truth is, David is a menace to the group. He offers the irresistible temptation of the little country on the borders of a mighty one.

In such cases, the best solution—and it is one which the victim comes to recognize for himself—is for him not to attempt to play with the others for a while, though he may play alongside or near a friendly adult who will give him some bolstering. In the same way, it is never wise nor fair, to expect children con-

tinually to play with those older or younger than themselves. Many parents insist on brothers and sisters always playing together, but such a practice may mean that the aggressive impulses of the older child are constantly stimulated while at the same time he is not allowed to express them, and is peppered with, 'Don't be rough! You'll hurt him! He's a little boy!'

Parents may roughly be divided into two camps in this matter of aggression—those who find it difficult to conceal their pride when their boy lands out at another, and those who dart out to stop him from being spiteful. But whatever their views, the majority do not want to see their children either bullies or victims, and we who have vivid memories of two wars and stand in the shadow of world conflict, may well fear this urge to fight and see in every childish scrap, every gangster game, every toyshop window, ominous portents.

But we can be sure of this. There is scarcely any adult who would willingly see cruel streaks developing in a child however much he himself may personally admire courage, the ability to stand up for one's self, toughness, grit and the like. Moreover, we can take comfort from the thought that children themselves appreciate help in controlling their own aggression. Many parents will have observed that a tantrum is often prolonged because the child is frightened of the rage that possesses him, and burdened by his guilt at being 'naughty'. They will have heard the angry cries change into sobs of relief as he is carried out of the room to cry himself back into calm. He will be grateful to the mother who catches his hand and folds it in hers when he goes to strike her, and she will help him more by doing this than by her angry shouting, 'Control yourself!'

It may fairly be said that the child who is unable to

control his aggressive impulses at all after the nursery years, is the child who sees and experiences it at home. The mother who has never learned maturer ways of expressing her own aggression, will strike her own child who lifts his hand, saying, 'That'll teach you not to hit people!' In fact of course, it teaches the exact opposite—that violence is the only way of solving difficulties. The child may certainly stop hitting her, but he will very certainly get his own back on someone less powerful. He grows into the child who cannot be trusted near a younger one, who torments the cat and becomes generally known as 'spiteful.'

Aggression is usually regarded as a destructive force, perhaps because in the minds of adults, it is associated with the colossal destruction of war. But the very energy which motivates it, makes it potentially a constructive force in our lives when rightly used. The crawling child delights in knocking down bricks that others have built for him, but give him another year and the tumbling down of his own bridge will be followed by painstaking and determined rebuilding. The will to survive, to build, to create, derive their incentive from aggression. Man's conquest of nature, his determination to succeed, to reach his full stature, are inspired by this mighty power. One might say that the same spirit that was in Attila was in St. Francis of Assisi. The single-minded goal, the tireless energy are akin—however opposed the ends and the means may be.

It is this fact which gives us the clue to our handling of our children's aggressive impulses. We should see them primarily as valuable elements in the total personality, and aim at directing them into channels which we regard as ethically right.

We can begin this work very early, always bearing in mind that we can no more hasten their development in this than in walking and talking. We cannot insist on mature modes of behaviour, but we may very early suggest them, and we owe it to them to teach them early the meaning of true courage, magnanimity, mercy and the like, and to give them myriad examples of these in story and in our personal lives.

Four Years, speaking of a two-year-old companion says, 'I don't need to push Rob when I don't want to play with him, do I? I only need to say "Rob, I don't want to play with you".' But he says it reflectively as if savouring some entirely new and not very convincing idea. It is so very obvious that Rob understands a push much better! Nevertheless, it is a new idea, and in time will replace the pushes. He is losing nothing by having it presented to him early on, even though he cannot wholeheartedly accept it.

Children arrive gradually at their conception of abstract ideas. A group of eleven-year-olds for example, will need some persuading that a man behind a tommy gun who faces twenty others, is not necessarily brave, indeed that he may be the biggest coward of them all. Early conceptions of virtues like courage are enlarged and corrected by what they are told and learn and observe for themselves. Ideas of crude physical courage are amplified to include moral courage and the whole personality matures in this kind of wider understanding.

A story like that where David finds his lifelong enemy asleep and at his mercy and spares him, brings a new meaning to the word 'courage' to the young child. He will admire the hero who has learned to stay his hand, even while he himself is still at the stage where he lands out at his younger brother who has dared to touch his

trains. No matter. He needs ideals put before him to help him reach his full stature as a plant the light to draw it upwards. He needs to know that there are other ways of reacting than by mere brute force and gradually he will come to realize for himself the value of being able to control and direct the forces within.

We must however, be wary of demanding from the child a stage of development which he has not reached. As we have seen, the little child needs to be crudely aggressive for his healthy development. If we demand from him too much forbearance as towards younger children, we shall find him in an effort to control himself, turning his anger against himself. We may note obvious symptoms such as nail-biting or an unpleasant 'goodness' that clamours for attention. 'I'm not naughty like that, am I? I don't make scenes.' Or the motive may work in more subtle ways, and the child may be an adept in luring another to perform some anti-social act. 'I dare you to stand on the desk while Miss Blank is out of the room.' When he is successful, he has doubly satisfied his aggression in seeing his companion's punishment and Miss Blank's annoyance.

A child needs to glory in the terrible might of war in his games to appreciate to the full the strength of will of those who renounce it. It is not before adolescence generally, that pacifism makes any great appeal, and progress towards pacific ideals is erratic and confused as every sincere adult knows. Boys who play cowboys and Indians on Monday and rejoice in counting scalps, will play as easily King Arthur's knights rescuing the defenceless the next day.

At adolescence we may introduce with advantage stories of the great moral reformers of the ages who

fought outworn modes of thought and class systems. Adolescents notoriously thrill to these and ally themselves with the great leaders of men who fought with heart and mind to leave the world a better place.

At every stage, side by side with the outlet for aggression, should be provided opportunities to use it to advantage. The gang who has decided to spend the afternoon baiting their weakest member, may be persuaded to build instead a hideout at the bottom of the garden. The spontaneously verbalized play may be given a permanent form in a finished production for parents on a summer evening. Girls, whose tiffs occupy much of their time, may be welded to organize a garden party for a favourite charity. Indeed, every club and any organized game, needs and uses up constructively every ounce of available aggression, and mothers whose children are actively engaged in one, may heave a sigh of relief.

It must never be forgotten that those anti-social children who strike their elders with terrible foreboding—hooligans, delinquents, or by whatever name we choose to describe them—are, without exception, grossly deprived children. All too frequently they themselves have suffered violence at the hands of adults, have accepted physical force early in life as their aim and object because they were forced to recognize its power over themselves. They have never been taught to make room for other thoughts which might grow and check the growth of destructive forces. Most surely of all, however much they may have been indulged, they have never been loved so that they could learn to love in return.

It would be safe to say that any child given opportunities to express the aggression natural to his stage

of development and who has been shown how to use it instead of being used by it, will never be led into anti-social activities. What may be of far more importance to the mothers of to-day—and indeed to the world—is that should they, in adult life, be faced with the great issues of peace and war, they will at least have understood why it has been said, 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace!'

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Green-Eyed Monster

Is jealousy inevitable and what can we do about it?

JEALOUSY is a mean emotion. The refusal of people in general to admit that they are, or could be jealous, and their readiness to condemn anyone who shows signs of it, are proof enough of our realization that it is an unworthy character trait. From the beginning of time it has been recognized, as in the story of Cain and Abel, as a force destructive of the best in human nature, impoverishing alike the jealous individual and those about him.

In spite of condemnation however, jealousy flourishes and ramifies throughout the whole of human life. If it is a monster, it is a many-headed one. The elder child is jealous of the petting bestowed on the younger, the younger of the privileges accorded the elder. Middle children are resentful that they have neither petting nor privileges. The only child feels himself to be an unwanted third member in the family, but on the other hand, in a brood of children there are cross-currents of angry feeling.

The wife is suspicious of the influence of the mother-in-law, and the husband of the children's ascendancy in the home. And outside the family, it continues—annoyance at the boy who carried off the prize we coveted, of the fellow who got the job we should have had, of our neighbour who has just acquired a new car.

Every one of these manifold appearances has the same origin, however different they may appear, and however justified we feel them to be. They spring from a basic feeling of fear, the insecurity of feeling that we are not valued as much as someone else, that someone is threatening our happiness, our livelihood or our prestige.

It is for this reason that jealousy is so apparent in the nursery world where the dependence of the child on others is complete and inevitable. Children are jealous of one another because each is a rival for parental affection, and the child's safety depends on securing for himself the maximum amount of that affection. It is while a child is immature in loving—as he must be in his early years when he has not learned to love—that he finds it impossible to believe Mummy can love other children as well as himself. He at present, can only love her.

Jealousy is a serious problem in childhood because if it is not dealt with sympathetically and effectively then, it will through the years, be consolidated into a marked character trait in the individual. It is a sobering thought to reflect how many nursery jealousies are carried on to the end of life,—how many elderly people speak of their ageing brothers and sisters with bitterness, 'Of course, *he* was always spoilt. My mother always petted *her*'.

The child who, early in life, feels another member of the family is preferred to himself, will make some attempt to oust his rival, be it another child or a parent. He may become excessively naughty to secure all the available attention—(most delinquents show a history of jealous feelings)—or if this fails, excessively good.

As a rule, however, whatever he does, he fails to

supplant the favourite, but he learns better than to express his resentment in the home. 'You nasty, jealous little thing! You shan't have any at all now! Nobody will like you!'

Condemnation of this sort, warns the child against the expression of his feelings, but does not get rid of them. Instead, he displaces them on to other people outside the family protection. He explains that the boy who came top is teacher's pet, points out that everyone else has more pocket money than he has, and that his old tennis racket prevents him from winning. 'It isn't fair!' is on his lips a dozen times a day, because in truth, life isn't fair to him.

It goes without saying that he will carry this behaviour pattern with him throughout life, and that much of his available energy will be absorbed in maintaining it instead of being directed to the fuller development of his own abilities.

It is therefore of the utmost importance that we should try to nullify our children's jealousies as soon as they appear. It is not enough to prepare a first child for the arrival of a second and expect him thereafter to show nothing but kindness to the newcomer. The infant in the shawl is no threat at all to the older child compared with the vigorous toddler two years later, who demands his trains, whines when he is pushed, and must be hedged about with excuses and privileges! 'Let him have it! He's the baby! You'll hurt him! Look after him for me!'

Children must be shown actively and continuously that they are equally beloved. We should not be content to say, 'But they have the same things. What I buy for one, I buy for all.' The important point is not whether one child has cause for jealousy or no, but

whether he *feels* he has cause. And in this matter, children vary as much as adults.

The righteous attitude of 'You shan't have anything for being jealous' must be replaced by 'You shall have something because you are jealous.' In giving a jealous child some mark of our affection, we dispel his doubts and help him to see that they were needless and to say at last, if doubtfully, 'Well, all right. Let him have it.'

Some children, through temperament or circumstance, are especially susceptible to such feelings. The ugly sister of the family, the boy who fails to read as early as his brother did, the weakling, the child who turned out to be a fourth boy in a family instead of the longed-for girl—all these are especially prone to be jealous. They are perpetually on the watch for signs of injustice, and as in the case of Othello, every most trivial circumstance is but deadly confirmation.

Again, children who express themselves easily draw from adults marks of favour which others cannot. 'My sweet little mummy!' says Four Years, patting her face and basking in her smile, while Ten Years looks enviously on, but cannot bestow his affection in this way or see her smile in return. Instead of writing off these bigger children as cold, we need to regard them with imaginative insight and to appreciate their different modes of expression and respond to them as actively.

It is understandable that in children, jealousy is very closely linked with material advantage. Love, to a little child, is its material expression, the giving of kisses, caresses, food that one likes, toys and so on, and this conception gives way very slowly to ideas of self-sacrifice, patience, and thoughtfulness. (It is humiliating to reflect how often we adults, whether as giver or recipient, measure esteem by the material cost of a gift!)

It is not surprising therefore, that among children, helpings of pudding are measured with an eagle eye at the family table, and that 'His is bigger! Mine's got more jam!' become significant statements of despair and elation. Who shall sit next to Mummy, who shall hold her hand, who shall have the scrapings of the treacle tart—these are to children, vital questions because they symbolize the degree of prestige they have in the family circle and the amount of affection they can command.

It is therefore essential that children should be given not merely the same things, but that they should be given them in the same way, and with the same smile, the same inflection of voice. It is incredible how many adults in charge of children, betray their own preferences in a few sentences to a casual acquaintance. 'Yes, she's getting on, but you wait till you see my boy!' The voice softens, the face lights up. It is impossible to believe that any average child could remain unaware of such fundamental differences in attitude, no matter how much the adult asserts, 'Of course, I treat them exactly alike!'

It is helpful in family life, to encourage communal pursuits and possessions alongside individual hobbies—to provide a low table and chairs for nursery pursuits, a shed in the garden as a workshop for the boys, a toy theatre for co-operative efforts, or a family table game among the Christmas presents. These things ensure that the word 'ours' is heard as often as the word 'mine' in the household, and demonstrate the value and fun of doing things together. How much more magnificent Bob's yacht was for example, because Susie machined the sails so neatly! The child who has experience of this kind of activity, satisfies his own need to prove himself

a valued member of the group, and learns at the same time, the narrowness of interests that are never shared.

It follows that anything which becomes a focal point of jealousy—and every parent and nurse knows how many things can be so—are best held in common, or even cast out. One mother whose meal times were ruined by arguments as to whose turn it was to have a plate with a blue flower—an export reject—was constrained to put it on the topmost shelf of the dresser where all could share in seeing it.

The extra special foreign stamp that Uncle sent, the only perfect razor shell found on the beach, are best relegated to the china cabinet as a family museum, instead of being awarded to an individual for some piece of extra good behaviour. To argue exhaustingly that 'It's not worth anything, anyway' or 'You don't really want it,' is a waste of time. It is valuable and he does want it because it is a symbol of what every child craves—parental favour. If the object of discussion is labelled 'ours' the adult is never called upon to justify his favour and jealous feelings will not be stirred.

Children must be jealous because they are unsure of themselves and their claim to adult approval. It is unfair to them to expect them to show maturer character traits of unselfishness, generosity and self-effacement. The continued reassurance of our love for them will alone make them ready to admit others to a share of our affection, because only then are they confident that they cannot be displaced.

CHAPTER TWENTY

‘The More You Have. . . .’

When is discontent normal, and when abnormal?

‘MUMMY, LOOK, that’s just what I want! Mummy, will you buy me——? Mummy, can I have——?’ Outside any toy shop, the same litany is heard, and often the same responses from a bored and exasperated mother: ‘No, you can’t. Oh, come along, do! You’re always wanting something or other!’ The child is dragged away, the mother accompanying lagging footsteps with her reproaches: ‘Never satisfied. You don’t play with what you’ve got now. I shan’t bring you out if you keep asking.’

It is disturbing to many parents—this tendency of some children to want everything they see—disturbing and disheartening. Perhaps they do their utmost to supply the child’s wants. Probably they spend more than they can afford at Christmas and on birthdays, and to be met by a recurring discontent at the sight of new toys, fills them with justifiable annoyance.

A good deal of our alarm and despondency on these occasions, however, is unnecessary. The ecstatic, ‘Oo, Mummy, I do want——’ is frequently no more to be taken seriously than our own murmured raptures as we pass through a department store. The want is a passing thought—a pleasant fancy to be toyed with for a moment. ‘That frock would just suit me! That’s just what I could do with!’

We can dismiss the want more quickly because we are able to bring all our maturer thought to the situation. 'I don't really need it. I can't afford it. I've no real use for it.' These are considerations that come floating up into our minds and which we listen to or ignore as the case may be. But our original want is on a par with the child's and no more to be regarded as an expression of base ingratitude than his.

If we can view the matter in this light, we shall check the cries of Ungrateful! Discontented! Greedy! that spring to our lips, and spare the child the impatient tug or exasperated poke. We can also spare ourselves the grim brooding in the mid-hours of the night that we are rearing a miserable child!

We shall instead, when he voices these desires, look with him and pause to say, 'Yes, it is nice, isn't it? And look at the dear little signals!' And continuing this friendliness, 'I like the zoo animals over there as well, don't you?' An expressed sympathy of this sort, helps the child to 'window shop' and removes from him any suggestion that he has been guilty to speak a wish aloud.

It also effectively reduces the original want to perspective. Seeing so many other lovely things, the first choice loses the imperative value which it will retain if he is dragged away lamenting, without more ado.

We might even, on occasion, try to gratify his wish if it seems reasonable, without feeling that we are in danger of ruining him for ever or that he will expect us to do the same thing every time. To say, 'I think you have enough money in your box for that, if you are sure that's what you'd like to buy. Let's go home and see,' will help to teach a child what money is for—to exchange for something else—a lesson as necessary as

that some should be saved for the endlessly-postponed rainy day.

Or if buying is out of the question, we can enter into the mood by: ‘I think we could make a doll’s bed like that at home. I’ve got a box that would just do and some stuff to line it, and you can make the bed clothes.’ After all, who would voluntarily choose as a shopping companion a friend who responded to one’s sigh: ‘Oh, I would love that!’ with ‘Don’t be silly! You know you wouldn’t wear it!’?

It is important to see things as they really are, to realize that the child who runs hither and thither in the fairyland of a toy department, fingering, exclaiming, delighting in one treasure after another, expressing his spontaneous appreciation, is exhibiting normal and wholesome behaviour. If indeed, he refused to look because he couldn’t have these things—and that has been known—or never voiced a sigh, we should have reason to worry.

Even the child who clutches his friend’s toy at parting and says, ‘I want to keep this’ or ‘Can I take this home?’ is guilty of no more than a breach of conventional good manners as judged by adult standards. He is at least saying wholeheartedly, ‘I do like this toy of yours!’

What is not normal and should give rise to serious consideration, is the child who literally never is satisfied. These children are unmistakable, though the people who are with them constantly are often unaware of their behaviour as abnormal. They accept with impatience perhaps, that one child never plays with anything, they scold him for always wanting what other children have got, and they reprimand him for bothering them to settle differences. It is not uncommon to see such a child follow an adult about the house, asking

for some trifle or other—paper to draw on, scissors and something to cut out, paste and scraps—and when this want is supplied, to abandon it at once.

If other children are present, he will often sit lethargic until one is engrossed in a toy and then pounce on it with cries of 'I want that now. It's my turn!' Spider-like, he gathers around him one toy after another, refusing to share or give up or take turns. His play out-of-doors, is interrupted by innumerable interludes of running in for a sweet, or an apple.

It is not a pretty picture, but the regrettable thing about it is not that he is a difficult child, or that he makes a poor playmate and the like—though these are in fact most people's conscious reasons for disliking him. It is his unhappy anxiety that should disturb us.

Such a child cannot play with his bricks because he is afraid that another child is having a better time with the tractor. He cannot take a turn on the tricycle because he doesn't really believe his turn will ever come, or he fears that it will be a shorter one than the other boys have had. He cannot become absorbed in play, because his thoughts torment him.

These tormenting thoughts are all of a pattern. He is afraid of not getting enough, and when we ask why, we are forced to give the answer, 'Because he doesn't get enough—of the things that matter.' A mother was buying party trimmings for a very poor little rich girl and included boxes of super luxury crackers, each mounted by a model huntsman. 'I want all the horses afterwards, every one!' said the child emphatically. No one seeing her, could have doubted that her toys would not have out-valued those trifles many hundreds of times, or that if she had been given the huntsmen, she would

have known what to do with them. Yet the thought of other children sharing in them was literally painful, when deep in her mind was the belief that she herself had so little.

The child who trails his mother over the house saying, 'What can I play at?' when downstairs there is a cupboard full of toys, is really saying, 'Why don't you talk to me, look at me, belong to me?' It is the mother who is always too busy whose child is continually running to her for a sweet, an apple, an ice-cream. These are substitutes for something more permanent from the mother which is denied him, and it must be admitted that there are mothers who find these substitutes cheap at the price.

Probably many of us have succumbed to the urge to buy a new hat when we have felt particularly neglected or dispirited, and perhaps some of us have experienced the slightly astonished feeling afterwards that even now we do not feel on top of the world. The answer is of course, that we did not want a hat at all, but something else which life had denied us.

The child who is not sure of anything—his mother's love, his place in the home, finds solace and reassurance in what he can get. The sweet given carelessly, at least means some contact with mother. The more toys, the bigger and better ones he has, are proof to him, and sometimes to others, that he is a person of consequence in the home.

If these children fall to our care, and we are anxious to help them, it is clear that we shall do nothing by forcibly removing their toys and giving them to their guests to play with. Strictures that they are being selfish, that no one will love them, that they will not have a turn at all and so on, fall on deaf ears. They only hear

the empty echo of their own lives; they are only conscious of what they haven't got.

Our treatment therefore will be to give them first and foremost, the listening ear, a sponge-like absorption of their complaints. Perhaps we may say if they don't know what to do, 'Why not come and help me for a bit?' Or if we provide them with an occupation, we shall first of all sit down with them and give them a start at it. At all times we shall resist the very natural temptation to say, 'Now leave me alone!'

For a time at least, they will need a surfeit of reassurance, friendly looks, warm arms, and comfortable laps. 'You've done that nicely. I do like that! Yes, yours is splendid!'—comments like these are soothing and comforting to such a child, and help him to relax a little and to play.

Gradually and then increasingly, we may expect from him some tokens of a new generosity, the sign of his growing security. 'Now you can let Robert borrow your scooter for a while. He'll give it back,—he won't break it. There, look how he's enjoying it and you've still got the wheelbarrow to play with. Soon it will be your turn.' We must always remember that we can never *make* a child share, though it is possible to teach him to do so, and we must expect children with this background to learn the lesson more slowly than others who have been given more from their earliest days.

We cannot and should not expect our children in the gay days of their early years to exhibit monastic virtues of holy poverty, to understand how hardly money is earned, to believe that it is much better to go without, that it is 'easy come, easy go', that you never miss what you don't have—and the rest of sound but somewhat dreary adult philosophy.

But when Four Years can look round a toy department, and seeing the very latest scale-model tractors can say cheerfully (referring to his battered tin one at home), 'I've got one a bit like that, haven't I?' we can rejoice. We smile, not because we are spared the annoyance of his asking or complaining, but because we can be sure we are giving him all he needs, and we may come to believe that it is truer after all perhaps to say, 'The more you have, the *less* you want.'

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Exhibit A

*What can we do about shyness and its reverse—
'Showing off'?*

VERY EARLY in life, the child is called upon to face many times situations which observation leads us to believe must be ordeals for him—namely, meetings with people who are more or less strangers. That 'ordeal' is not too strong a word, may be judged by the average child's behaviour on these occasions. He may become ridiculously shy, or 'show off' alarmingly, but either way he is disappointing to the parent who naturally enough is anxious to exhibit him at his best.

Why is it, we may ask ourselves, that children choose these moments to bring out their whole stock of irritating behaviour? Why cannot they reveal readily and easily to the stranger the charm we know so well? 'You never go on like this as a rule!' is a frequent reprimand. 'What's come over you?'

The answer is partly in the phrase 'as a rule'. From infancy and all through the nursery years, the child needs things to happen 'as a rule' and any interruption of the normal routine is likely to provoke unusual reactions in him. Parents are well aware of this and on holidays for example, are prepared for the child to be a little difficult perhaps, to go off his food and to lose sleep. In the same way, everyday occurrences which also upset the child's joyous monotony, such as the arrival of

visitors, are equally liable to provoke troublesome behaviour.

Next, we need to recognize that both the excessive self-abasement (shyness) and excessive self-assertion ('showing off') so typical on these occasions, are ways in which the child tries to handle a situation which is too difficult for him. And further, we must also be willing to admit that it is we adults who generally speaking make the difficulties.

To take shyness first: there is scarcely anyone reading phrases like 'painfully shy', 'agonies of shyness', 'miserably self-conscious' who would call them exaggerated. Yet adults who, on the whole, are kindly disposed towards children, ready to forgive or excuse or overlook, are at their most unhelpful and short-sighted in dealing with the shy child.

'Go on,' they say, pushing the rigid little shoulders towards the broadly smiling visitor, 'go on—he won't eat you!' 'Come along,' says the stranger, showing his teeth and looking as if he were about to do that very thing, 'I don't bite!' 'I like little girls,' is the unflattering contribution of another, seizing the victim by main force and planting her on his knee, or—utterly incredible—the deep bass voice booms, 'I was once a little boy like you!'

In vain the little child looks to his sole protector, his mother, in his hour of need. She has no patience with his qualms and says so. 'I've no patience with you! You're just putting it on!' The child remains aloof with hanging head, finger in mouth, or scrambles from the unwelcome embrace with undisguised repulsion.

Other children however, instead of retreating from the situation as does the shy child, will advance and become repulsively exhibitionistic in their attempt to

focus all eyes on themselves. A much tried parent will warn the hypnotized visitor, 'Don't take any notice of him. He's only doing it to attract attention,' and triumphantly add to the offender, 'Nobody's looking at you!' The palpable untruth of this statement only results of course, in the renewed activity of the child who realizes how successful he is being and goes from bad to worse.

Yet however exasperated we may feel, most of us in our hearts know that to a great extent our children cannot help being like this on formal occasions, that it is the child's growing consciousness of himself as a separate individual which makes it difficult for him to merge himself in the company, to be unnoticed. The mother of a year-old child will say proudly, 'She'll go to anyone—doesn't mind who takes her.' But let a few months pass, and the same mother will complain, 'Can't understand it. Won't go to anyone but me.'

The gulf between himself and the stranger widens as he becomes aware that he is a person in his own right. His new self-consciousness is all too often reinforced by the idiotic treatment of the many adults who adore him and produce him as Exhibit A. 'And this is Bobby,' says Mummy, leading him forward, and her unctuous tone is reminiscent of Cornelia presenting her jewels. 'So this is Bobby,' says the newcomer, bending down from tremendous height to have a good look.

Some personal observations follow. 'He's like you. How tall! Marvellous colouring!' The child may enjoy the attention; it does not help him to enjoy the company and obliterate himself. He may relax sufficiently in a little while to speak naturally, and his comments are taken up and repeated with admiration or amusement. He is forced into the unenviable role of the dis-

tinguished visitor from whom too many people expect too much, and we are annoyed with him if he underplays or overplays his part.

Parents of a child who seems especially shy are justified in curtailing the demands made on him on these occasions. He should be defended from the visitor who wants to nurse him or hear him recite, and excused a formal greeting or farewell until he is sure enough of himself to extend these. It is better for him indeed to be ignored until something interesting or reassuring about the newcomer—the seal on a watch chain or the recognition of teddy as a member of the household—encourages him to give back a word or smile.

The complaint that the child is rude or badly trained because we do not ‘insist’ on his overcoming his shyness and ‘behaving sensibly’ may conscientiously be disregarded! If we insist instead on our policy, we shall find that the next few years—from the beginning of school-days to puberty—will show a marked decrease in shyness. Children of this age may mumble a greeting and follow it up with a quick ‘Can I go out to play now?’ but at least they have not found the occasion a problem, or presented one to the watchful mother!

With adolescence, however, shyness often returns in full force. The teenager who is continually reminded of her irregular teeth or pale face will find the panic of her baby days sweeping back with redoubled force. But just as the little child needs the mother’s physical protection in company if he is to show himself at his best, so will the adolescent appreciate a parent to whom he can confess how awful he feels, how he dreads so-and-so coming, how frightful it is to have to talk to people and so on.

He will be grateful for the assurance that he looks

nice and can talk interestingly—yes, even that people like him. Most of all he will like to know that we all feel something of the same on occasion, especially if it is followed up by the flattering truth that shy people are usually very nice, even nicer than the bold.

The child who shows off needs understanding if he is to be relieved of his compulsion to assert himself. As we have seen, his growing self-consciousness of an intimidating world forces him to seek protection, usually from his mother, and when this is wanting, as when she is temporarily occupied with a visitor, he will begin to make her aware of himself, will twitch her skirt, and if this only results in 'Be quiet! Wait a moment! I'm talking!' he will try some more spectacular form of misbehaviour, swinging on her hand, running round and round, or deliberately do some forbidden thing.

It is important to recognize how purposeful this behaviour is: it is the child's means of self-protection, a crude way of calling the mother to her sense of duty. Few adults remember that a child would rather have an irritated mother than a mother, who for some (to him) inexplicable reason, suddenly withdraws the comfort of her presence.

Even children of primary school age who might be expected to be permanently reassured of her affection, suffer from a recurrence of early anxiety when their boisterous return from school, instead of being hailed by 'Tea's ready' is replaced by, 'Come in quietly. Grandma's here,' or worse, 'Run out to play for a little while. I'm talking to Auntie.'

At this stage, the child's resentment of his lack of attention coupled with his growing belief in himself as a very fine fellow, will impel him to show off his skill in a careful choice of infuriating behaviour—acrobatics on

the drawing-room furniture, or gastronomical feats such as putting a whole jam tart in his mouth at once. This type of exhibitionism is impish more than malicious, and the mother who shows her exasperation, gives him an intoxicating sense of his own power.

Adolescence too, brings with it new and heady currents that drive the child forward to new forms of 'showing off'. He is no longer as sure of his abilities and charm, but he is paradoxically increasingly aware of his right to be recognized and saluted. He may no longer stampede the visitor into looking at his tadpoles, but he may immerse himself ostentatiously in a book so that his name has to be called three times, or turn on the radio dance band *fortissimo* to express his opinion of adult chit-chat. He will butt in on adult conversation to prove his maturity, and declare his atheism, communism and idealisms of every kind at the most inopportune moments.

It is interesting to note that all these forms of exhibitionism have this in common from infancy to the end of childhood—they are unerringly chosen as the reddest of red rags for that particular parent. No child, driven by the need to assert himself, is going to make the mistake of doing something that Mother doesn't mind!

A certain amount of 'showing off' is obvious, is normal and indeed inevitable in childhood, as in adult life, and we should therefore be prepared for its appearance, be undismayed by it, and understand, that on the way it is handled in the early years, will depend the nature of its successive reappearances.

Exhibitionism, unwisely handled in childhood, may prevent the adult from reaching true maturity. Most people are familiar with the uneasy grown-up who is

constantly tormented by his need to dominate every gathering. On the other hand, that most tiresome of individuals, the person who is always calling attention to his own deficiencies and thereby putting himself in the forefront, is equally a victim of early exhibitionism. The woman who continually remarks, 'Of course, I'm an utter fool. Absolutely hopeless,' could almost certainly be traced back to the child who found at school an easy notoriety in being the buffoon of the class—who turned up for gym in house-shoes, and piped up three bars ahead of everyone else in singing.

Once we accept these simple examples, we shall be prepared to regard some physical ills as forms of exhibitionism thrown up by the ego that craves for extra solace. Attacks of asthma, headaches, sickness and so on which often begin in childhood, are in many cases directly traceable to this cause.

It is worth taking pains to handle the whole problem of shyness and 'showing off' sympathetically. Many children's rooted dislike of visitors would be avoided if they did not connect 'someone coming to tea' with their own inevitable exclusion. This does not mean a child must continue to exact his usual amount of attention when visitors are present: on the contrary, he can learn to accept gracefully his relegation to the background at such times.

Even though we know in our heart of hearts, Grandma has made the long and wearisome journey of hundreds of miles to see her first grandchild, the accent must be that, 'She's coming to stay with us for a holiday and we want to help her to have a happy time', not that, 'She's coming to see you and you must show her what a good little boy you can be'.

Then the child can be encouraged to use up his

energy outside himself, to show Granny where her room is, to point out the flowers he has picked for her from his garden, to reveal that there is a chicken for dinner in her honour. These activities will effectively prevent him turning his thoughts back on himself and his own feelings.

Few adults are really interested in our children—even those who have children of their own, but most visitors will be responsive to a remark like, 'John wants you to see the snaps he took with his birthday camera' or 'You can show Auntie the dolls' clothes you've made while I get the tea.' Concessions such as these restore a child's confidence that he is not in the way, and he will be more ready to respond to a suggestion like, 'Now you can settle yourself at the corner of the table while we talk.'

More important, however, from his point of view is that his self-consciousness is channelled into agreeable and useful patterns of behaviour. He learns to listen to others, to ask them about their interests, to be content with a footstool instead of taking the best armchair. He learns in fact, the importance of other people, and he expresses his self-assertion in his self-made decision to put them first while they are present.

It need scarcely be said that these demands must be tempered to the age of the child. It is unfair to expect a toddler to stand still for ten minutes while we gossip in the street, or to expect energetic youngsters to sit with bated breath while Uncle rambles on about building restrictions. It should be possible to offer some alternative distraction—preferably discussed beforehand—to provide a pile of magazines say, and a grand scheme for starting a new scrapbook.

Self-abasement is as natural as self-assertion, and a

child can be taught a harmonious balance of both, but like all learning processes, it is a step-by-step procedure beginning from earliest days. It is for the parent to see that the child is not unduly crushed or produced. The 'speak when you're spoken to!' attitude is responsible for much ugly inferiority later on. On the other hand, excessive demands on the child for adult social behaviour, which he cannot attain, will drive him to compensate by some form of annoyance.

No child who is allowed to assume his rightful status in the family circle from infancy, will need to browbeat his elders in adolescence, or to retreat into himself. He will long ago have learned that each one has his claim to be heard, his interest and his importance. His own need to be noticed, to defend himself in company, will decrease as a well-founded confidence in his own worth grows, and he will lay aside these tricks of childish behaviour as he becomes mature.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

‘Bring up a Child . . .’

*How seriously should we regard delinquencies
in childhood?*

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY is a subject which is literally very much in the air to-day—tossed about amongst parents, teachers and magistrates, all in turn disclaiming responsibility.

But every mother knows in her heart, that the task of teaching her child what is right and wrong according to our social code, at least begins in the home with her. She will frankly admit that excuses like, ‘He’s been led away,’ ‘got into bad companionship,’ ‘it’s what he hears on the radio, or sees at the cinema and on TV,’ leave out the essential factor—that her boy gave way where he should have stood firm. She will rightly acknowledge that for a child to be charged by the law as ‘beyond control’ or ‘in need of care and protection,’ is the severest criticism that could be made of a parent.

Knowing these things, it is yet not easy to know how to set about guiding young feet into the path we have decided is right. The delinquent and his adult counterpart, the criminal, is the individual who is unable to deny his immediate satisfaction for a later gain, or his own good for the good of others—a point of view essentially childlike. If Four Years wants a sweet and knows there is a tin full in the cupboard, it is much more sensible in his opinion to help himself than to wait and ask

permission. And if he knows that punishment will follow his taking them, the most sensible course, is to deny the act. The fact that he has stolen and lied is meaningless compared with the immediate satisfaction of his desire.

This is not to say that a young child is full of original sin which must be knocked out of him at all costs. It does mean, however, that if he is to live peaceably with others, he must learn to put aside his own pleasure if it conflicts with the rights of others. It is through the loving guidance of the parents and especially of the mother, that he becomes willing to make this exchange. When Four Years then waits to ask if he may have a sweet—and can bear to be refused—he is acknowledging considerations other than his own wishes, but it would be unwise to assume that he will do so always. We must be prepared for many backslidings throughout life as in ourselves, and not demand of him adult standards of conduct while he is still immature.

Lying is perhaps the commonest of the delinquencies and the first to make its appearance. It is also, curiously enough, lightly regarded by a great many parents who humorously refer to their children as 'fibbers' or 'story-tellers'. Yet the ability to lie easily and well paves the way admirably for further delinquency.

It is obvious to everyone acquainted with a young child that he lies at first because he does not distinguish between what exists in his mind and in the real world. Three Years runs out to play for a minute or two amongst half-a-dozen scruffy bushes in a London garden. 'Did you have a nice time?' asked his mother. 'Yes—I saw a squirrel on a branch with a tail sticking up, and then I saw two monkeys and one was eating a banana, and then——' It would surely have been taking things too far to have punished him for lying,

but we may seriously consider how far to share with a child the splendours of his imagination without allowing them to carry him too far away from reality.

Probably the best way is to take a friendly attitude to the young 'story-teller' while yet drawing him gently back into the 'real' world—to welcome the young adventurer in the bushes by 'How lovely! And did you see any lions?' Well, now I expect you want your dinner.' The older child may accept gentle amusement provided we do not laugh at him too obviously. This attitude will show him that we appreciate and value his romancing while yet keeping him in contact with reality. It would be sad indeed to laugh him out of it and to crush a gift which is the foundation of much that is creative in life.

There is however a clear distinction between this, affectionately called 'story-telling' and 'deliberate' lying which usually happens when children are fearful of the consequences of telling the truth. A hasty slap, or a too harsh punishment, 'That'll teach you not to tell me lies!' will in fact teach them to be more careful in future not to be found out. Punishment, if it must be given, should never be too severe and should close the incident. Only then can we expect a child to come of his own free will and say, 'I'm sorry, I've broken your best jam dish.' Only then will he be ready to accept his punishment without fear and without resentment.

Many parents, who would reject physical punishment, do not realize that they may threaten a child unwittingly. A six-year-old girl, the only child of loving parents, built up an elaborate fiction about her progress in reading till the mother was enlightened as to her backwardness. The latter's distress was of course at her child's deceit—she could not understand the need for it.

But she had shown the little girl very clearly how much she prized her for her intelligence and the child had learned her lesson. She felt that as long as she excelled other children, her Mummy would want her and love her, and so she concealed her failure.

The mother's course in this and similar cases was plain. It was first to make absolutely clear to the child that *whatever* she did, her mother's love for her would not change, to say endlessly in word or action or smile—'I don't want the cleverest or prettiest child, I only want you.' A child who is well assured of this, is armed with courage to confess his most heinous crimes.

The second thing then was for the mother to point out how valueless lying is. Truth as an abstract idea, or as an ethical standard can have no meaning for children for many years. But a concrete demonstration of its value can make its appeal. In that case, for example, the mother could have said, 'What a pity you didn't tell me you weren't getting on with your reading! If I had known, I could have helped you and then you would have had a star by your name like the other children. Mummy will always help you if you are in trouble, but you must tell her first, or she won't know.'

From this can be gradually built up in the child's mind the worthwhileness of telling the truth because only then can you know where you stand with people. To say, 'John says he didn't do it and I can believe what he says,' is to give a child a very real reward.

As with simple lying, so with simple stealing. The first time Mother finds nine-year-old Johnny has stolen half a crown from her purse, her heart contracts with sudden fear at the thought that her son is a thief. But almost certainly it is not the first time that he has helped himself to her property. She knows quite well that he 'can't

resist' the sweet-tin if it is within reach, that she can't turn her back for a moment on the tray of newly-baked cakes—and then of course there was the time he ran off to school with his older brother's water pistol and they didn't find out till a week later who'd taken it. She's laughed at his greed and told him he was naughty for borrowing his brother's toy, but this—taking money! This is serious!

Stealing is in fact, regarded by most adults as THE delinquency to be feared. Habitual lying, which may be the gravest flaw in character, truanting which leads to irresponsible behaviour, even cruelty which brutalizes the individual—these may be ignored or laughed at. Stealing is another matter—witness the euphemisms in common use to avoid naming it, such as, 'winning', 'liberating', and 'knocking off'.

The little child has no scruples at producing from the depths of his pram after a shopping expedition a shiny tin of sardines. 'Look, Mummy, what I got for you!' The mother's dismay at his prize astounds him and he receives with some bewilderment her explanation that you must give pennies for things in shops before you bring them home.

It is an explanation which must be repeated endlessly and adapted daily in a hundred trifling incidents. 'No. You can't have that. It's not yours. You must ask first. You may have it for a little while. Now you must give it back.' The possessive case in all its forms must be taught long before school days begin:—hers, Mummy's, the other little girl's, Paul's, and yours.

We should never be tempted to blur our children's clear realization of its meaning. All too often a toy is left in a friend's house and never returned, or 'borrowed' or 'minded' with no thought of giving it back,

or picked up and no effort made at finding the owner. These first steps in stealing are taken very early, and many parents do not call a halt till they see the pace is taking the young offender out of their control. A thirteen-year-old boy was writing an essay called 'A Funny Story.' He described how Bob, pursued by a farmer whose apples he had stolen, raced home to his mother who concealed the booty just as the man arrived. He stormed into her cottage and she promptly had him arrested by the village constable for trespassing. So the farmer ended in the lockup and Bob and his mother sat down to apple-pie.

Apart from the considerable humour of the story, two facts stand out—the insight it gives into the young writer's background, and—what is more important—the fact that the official teaching he had received throughout life on the eighth commandment, meant nothing compared to the home teaching of 'finding's keeping'.

Looking at the problem constructively, however, we must admit that stealing is a very natural way of getting what one wants. Children, from the majority of homes at least, are deprived people in the sense that adults have control of the things they need. Mother, for example, has apparent power over a wide range of delicacies in the larder and father over an inexhaustible store of money. Then the problem of competing with other boys and girls in possessions is a heavy one, for children as well as for parents.

The only possible solution is for parents to make up their minds clearly how far they can meet the child's wishes in the form of pocket money and not to give way in desperation because of a battery of whining and complaints. Such money, with birthday and Christmas

tips, and perhaps oddments the child has earned, may be given on the understanding that he can do what he likes with it. Then when pencil-boxes or spinning tops are in fashion, he need not be out-of-date.

Frankness in discussion will go far towards soothing a child's bitter feelings about what he cannot have and make him ready to go without. A mother can, on occasion, put her cards on the table in the shape of her weekly housekeeping and show her teenage son exactly why she cannot double his pocket money. She is then not only giving him a satisfying answer, but showing that she is doing all she can. Her contentment and her willingness to go without now will bring her closer to him and make a strong appeal to his contentment.

Truancy the third of the common delinquencies is the only one which arouses any great sympathy and even envy on the part of the adult. Many a teacher, faced with the task of punishing Billy for spending a sunny half day down by the canal instead of at his desk, must have wished he too could have done likewise. Escapades like these are so essentially wholesome one feels, so obviously prompted by youth and high spirits, that we may often feel inclined to let the culprit off with a shrug and laugh.

Yet as with trifling cases of lying and stealing, it would be a mistake to dismiss even an occasional incident in this way. It is worth pointing out very clearly to Billy, that daddy has to go to work every day to keep the family. Mummy has her daily quota of jobs too to maintain a comfortable home, and in the same way, Billy has work that must be done. If we follow this up by allowing him to answer for his offence at school, we shall have helped him to understand what duty means.

The lesson, which in any case is not a harsh one, may prevent much trouble later on. A mother brought her thirteen-year-old son for treatment with every possible complaint about his unruly behaviour. After a few interviews, she revealed that in her efforts to be 'kind' to him in previous years, she had repeatedly covered up his truanting, and had thus not only cut away the ground from under her own feet, and now found that she could not reasonably insist on his regular attendance, but was virtually being blackmailed by him.

An early recall to duty is usually enough to nip the habit in the bud. If it persists, it is worth going into the question more deeply, and getting the child's viewpoint. Perhaps he plays truant every Tuesday afternoon, and we may find the class goes swimming then and he's afraid of the water, or he avoids a particular teacher's lesson. Very frequently, a visit to the school will put things right, and in any case, the fact that someone else knows about his weaknesses and wants to help him, will encourage him to develop the attitude of facing up to things instead of running away from them.

Sometimes, in the case of a younger child, it may happen that for the time being, imagination has swept away reality and school literally does not exist. A seven-year-old boy found wandering barefoot in the streets with a blanket tied round him, explained to the police who collected him that he had been kidnapped as a baby by negroes and had escaped from them and been living with animals in the jungle.

While we may enjoy the admirable invention and feel that this boy is potentially a great writer of fiction (he actually led a most humdrum existence), we should do well to point out to him that he can be kidnapped any evening or in the weekends. Certain hours from

Monday to Friday are reserved for school where he will play other games, and hear more exciting stories, and learn things that will help him in his adventuring. Such an attitude will encourage him to enjoy the adventure of school and to keep his day dreaming under control.

These everyday examples of delinquencies to which most children succumb at one time or another can be, as we have seen, fairly easily dealt with if they are handled realistically and without harshness. But it sometimes happens that children lie, steal and truant systematically in spite of all attempts to 'cure' them. If punishment for these offences has been excessive, if the child feels he has sinned beyond redemption, that no one will love him, that he is a disgrace, the black sheep of the family and so on, he has good reason to persist in his anti-social behaviour. Since no one loves him, it is obvious no one will mind what he does and moreover the doing of these forbidden acts brings him what he so desperately needs—the attention of other people. It matters not a whit that the attention takes the form of beatings, threats, social stigma and the like. He is getting some kind of recognition from the community even if it be notoriety rather than fame.

But occasionally one comes across children who without suffering at adult hands in this way nevertheless become so-called pathological liars, thieves and truants. When this is the case it is imperative to realize that some deep reason is compelling them, for they are clearly unable to face reality. A thirteen-year-old boy drew an admiring audience regularly at playtime with tales of his millionaire ranch-owning uncle in America who was coming over in the *Queen Elizabeth* to adopt him when he was fourteen, and who was going to intro-

duce him to a paradisaical existence. Or again, a twelve-year-old girl stole continually and gave the spoils to others. And again, two adolescent boys, friends from different homes, repeatedly truanted for two or three days at a time, in spite of severe thrashings when they turned up, wet, cold and hungry.

In all these cases, the delinquency is obviously compensating for something these children lack. To punish such offenders is obviously ineffective. Investigation showed that the first boy (the liar) was illegitimate and unwanted, and only in this fantasy world was he able for a time to believe that someone loved him. The girl thief was physically unattractive and the harsh treatment she got at home robbed her of the self-confidence necessary to make friends in any other way than by bribing them. The apparently stupid conduct of the runaway boys was in fact eminently reasonable. Their home conditions were so sordid that these desperate attempts were the abortive preliminaries to the real leaving home which eventually they would accomplish.

It is very clear that there would be no improvement in these cases until these fundamental unhappinesses were put right. (It may be noted in passing that any daily paper will bear witness to adults who suffer and act as these children do, who habitually exaggerate the splendour of their possessions, who shoplift while possessing a handsome bank balance and whose life is an attempt to escape from daily obligation.)

The young delinquent—and the criminal too perhaps—must get not what they deserve, but what they need. These children in their pitiful attempts to conceal their own unhappiness from themselves and others, plead for our mercy and an excess of love. And for our other and happier children, love too will make

up for much that we must demand of them and much that we must deny. He will know that the answer, ‘I can’t afford it,’ nevertheless implies, ‘but I wish I could give you all you want.’ And his constant love for us will help him to uphold the standards we have put before him, however great the passing temptations may be.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

In Sickness and in Health

What special demands does the sick child make of us?

HE WAS little and he was ill. A nasty tumble, a cut and some stitches meant bed for a few days. He was so very, very good. No, he didn't want anything. He was all right. He would call if he wanted anything.

On the fourth day, he said he would get up, but a sudden pallor and a bout of sickness as soon as he was on his feet, decided otherwise. 'And this time, Mummy,' he said, as she undressed him, 'this time, you bring your knitting in my room and you sit in the chair and knit. It's not nice when you keep on walking in and out.'

This was what he wanted, had wanted all along. Not grapes to eat, not a book to look at, not a fire in his room or the wireless at his bedside—not even an affectionate mother popping in and out of his room as she went about her duties, saying brightly, 'Are you all right, dear? Anything you want?' He wanted none of this, but the one thing he knew she would protest at, because of all the work waiting to be done, and this one thing?—a placid mother to sit in the chair near him, knitting.

It was not only the one thing he wanted—it was the one thing he *needed*, and it was in search of it that he had made the effort to get up. He had put his finger on the one essential in the nursing of sick children—the pres-

ence of the mother, an essential that the medical profession is beginning to realize and make provision for. Already hospitals are relaxing their stringent rules of 'visiting hours only' for children, and in some cases have even gone as far as to admit the mother to hospital with her child, because doctors have found that this does more for his recovery than all the expert medical care without her.

If we are fortunate enough then, to be able to keep the sick child at home, we should willingly adjust our time-table so that we can spend continuous periods with him. We shall accept that illness means not extra work, but a different sort of work, and be ready to throw overboard the routine of washing on Monday, ironing on Tuesday, without a qualm.

Our policy should be to concentrate on those jobs which can be done in the bedroom, even transferring some normally reserved for the kitchen, and to let the others go, and we should bear in mind that the daintiest meal sent up on a tray is not as appetizing as when we eat ours in the same room.

This does not mean a retirement to the sickroom where we keep up a flow of bright chatter to cheer the invalid up. It does mean that an hour or so spent with him quietly working while he is dozing or lying still, will give the child that steady reassurance which is so vital to his well-being both physical and mental. Then he will be able to release us willingly for short spells for those jobs which must be done elsewhere.

Nearly all of us have experienced that alarming lowness of spirit that comes in the wake of even minor illnesses, and which finds expression in morbid imaginings. We find ourselves dwelling on such topics as our own deathbed, frame our last words and even visualize

our own *cortège*. Children's fantasies may not take them quite as far as this—at least not until they are adolescent—but there is every reason to believe that in sickness they too, are especially prone to depressing fears.

For none of us has quite the grip on reality in sickness that we have in health, and it is more than probable that the child whose hold is much less secure than ours will be even more vulnerable than we are at these times.

The sick child, even with a loving mother, may feel that now when he needs her most, she has deserted him, or is tired of his illness and the work involved, or that she is bored with it and doesn't care for his sufferings.

In addition, he has fears for himself to cope with. The hardworked adult may almost welcome a few days in bed, but to a child any sickness that prevents him from running about, must be frightening. Pain and suffering are more difficult for him to bear because they are relatively unknown. We need only to recall children's horror at the sight of blood, or their first experience of being sick, to realize how deeply illness must affect them however unmoved they appear to be.

It may be said indeed, that the sick child is abnormal to some degree even as the delinquent is, and we must be prepared for behaviour that was not characteristic of him when he was well. He may react by being extraordinarily long-suffering and patient, punctilious about taking his medicine and brave about having a wound dressed. And this anxious desire to give no trouble to people at home or in hospital may well mask to all but the discerning, his consuming fear that he has become ill because he has been naughty. In a little child's mind, illness may be regarded confusedly as a punishment. He may link it with the time he punched his little sister, or even with angry thoughts against her—especi-

ally if he has been told how wrong it is to behave like this. But because he cannot and dare not express his anguish in words, he suffers in silence and waits for his ultra-goodness to redeem him.

Or again, he may, a usually tractable child, become unusually difficult, and bad-tempered even before he has had time to become bored by his illness. For to him, there is no real reason why illness should have descended on him. He cannot understand why he should be made to suffer like this, why his head aches and his throat is sore—still less, as sometimes happens, why he should be sent away from home at such a time. Here again obscurely, he finds an answer in his feelings. It is his mother's fault. She is responsible for making him ill or sending him away and his difficult behaviour is to revenge himself on her. (It is notable that he rarely 'plays up' the nurses in hospital to anything like the same extent.)

So it is at times of sickness particularly that the mere presence of a parent is comforting, to reassure him that she is not angry with him. She alone can dispel his fears and wrath. The knowledge that he has only to open his eyes to see her smile, will give him rest, and her occasional comforting word, 'You're looking much better. You may be able to sit up to-morrow,' are more healing than the most powerful medicine.

'Does your throat hurt?' asked a mother of a four-year-old.

'No, my throat doesn't hurt,' he answered a trifle impatiently. 'Nothing hurts except that (so long as) you love me.'

Love then, as expressed in our willing presence and our buffer-like attitude to his moods, should be our First Aid, but we can make it still more convincing to

him by the care with which we choose his occupations while he is in bed. We need to do more than lump on the chair beside him, half-a-dozen toys with the remark as we stand with our fingers on the door handle, anxious to get on with the housework, 'There! You've got everything you want. You'll be all right now?' Such perfunctory attention deceives no one, least of all the sick child who wants concrete expression of our care for him.

One or two toys which he really can play with in bed are quite enough to cope with at a time. A clutter of playthings on the eiderdown will tell him more quickly than anything that mother 'can't be bothered' and he will retaliate by tipping them on to the floor or by a campaign calculated to annoy her to the utmost—frequent calling and crying, 'I don't want to do this any more!'

We should recognize such protests as meaning 'I want *you*, Mummy,' and we should spare a few moments to make an exchange of play material and chat to him without annoyance. As the child really does not know what to do—he has not thought about that—it is better to suggest, 'Here are some pictures for you to colour,' rather than to ask with scant sympathy, 'Well, what do you want to do now?'

We shall of course take the obvious precautions of not giving occupations that require too much concentration, whether of mind or eye or fingers. Now is not the time to introduce the delicate art of building houses of cards or to buy some drawn thread-work for a sick girl. A box of large buttons to be sorted, or a quickly knitted pair of mittens in bright colours will be much more appropriate.

Ambitious projects such as cataloguing one's stamps

will be postponed till the child is fit again, and it is worth while trying to find something outside the run of his usual occupations. Bringing him in yet another book to colour is not nearly as stimulating as say, a magnet which can be tied to string and dropped over the side of the bed to fish up scattered safety pins. He may like to fray out scraps of silk to make bookmarks, or evolve complicated d'oyleys in paper-cutting, or try his hand at French knitting on a cotton reel stuck with four nails. It is this 'putting out' of ourselves that he will recognize and be responsive to, for here certainly, it is 'the thought that counts'. The mother's practical sympathy shown in these forms, will make it far easier for her to handle him and incidentally the tiresome routines of sick nursing.

We need to short-circuit the fear and reluctance which the child may show on these occasions by a simple matter-of-fact approach: 'Here's your medicine. What a colour! Look, it's got your name on the bottle and its says "one teaspoon three times a day". You'd better have one now.' Suggestions that a sweet will follow, or that he should hold his nose and then he won't taste it and so on, magnify the whole business to fearsome proportions.

Complaints that 'I don't want to' should be firmly dismissed by a whole-hearted agreement that cancels out a dispute: 'I know you don't want to, but we can't always do exactly what we want. Each dose will taste better. Come along—then I'll be able to tell Doctor and he'll be so pleased.' (The threat that he will be angry should of course never be used.)

The same firm but understanding manner should be the rule when wounds are to be dressed. 'Let's see how it's getting on. I'm sure you'll help me to do it nicely.'

The child should be allowed the luxury of tears. 'I know it hurts. Never mind. It's getting better and you did keep still.' He deserves praise if he has been brave, but if he cannot withhold his tears, he should certainly not be blamed. It is a mistake to use the superior tone: 'Oh, come along now! Only babies cry!' for the child will suffer more as he experiences our disapproval.

There is a further point. However serious the illness, the mother should disguise her own fears in the presence of the child, for as we know it is her face and manner which will tell him how to react. Her attitude of calm and assurance, of trust in doctors and nurses is imperative, for on it depends the child's fortitude. It is the hysterical reactions of many mothers at the spectacle of a sick child which have made so many hospitals suspicious of relaxed visiting rules.

If a child has to be removed to hospital, he should be told by the mother as far as she can explain it, what is to happen. There will be tears, but her promise that all will be well, that he will get better and that she will come and see him very soon and bring him home, are vital to ease his suffering. The coward's way of leaving a child at the hospital without any warning that he will have to stay, is indefensible.

One last point, and one frequently forgotten, is the aftermath. So many mothers, once their children are restored to them, feel that now all is over. But in fact after a severe illness—and a three-day operation for tonsils can be severe in the intensity of experience crowded into the time—the trouble often has only begun. The child who went into the ambulance without a word, who was so good all the time in the ward, inexplicably becomes unmanageable on his return. He doesn't speak about his absence and therefore as we

say, 'never thinks about it', but in reality he expresses his revolt at the whole ordeal by his tantrums, his hostility and his bad-temper when he returns. He is saying plainly to us in these ways, 'I suffered, and now I'm going to make *you* suffer.' We can help the child to forget these sufferings by talking to him, by telling him of our unhappiness when he was away and by explaining to him again and again in simple language why he had to go and how now it is all over he will grow fit and strong again.

It must never be forgotten that any illness for a child must have nightmarish qualities, and it is the mother primarily who can dispel these as she dispels his other fears. If she fails in this ordeal of her child's, she is leaving him open to terrors which he need never have experienced, and which will inevitably recur in the years to come.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

The Questioner

*What principles should guide us in answering
children's questions?*

FROM THE moment of birth and for many years afterwards if we prove our ability to satisfy them, our children turn to us to guide them through life, to explain its mysteries, to set their doubts at rest, to tell them what to do. From the first week of life we answer them clearly and eloquently by a smile, a frown, a raising of the eyebrows, a pursing of lips, a shake of the head, a nod, a lift of the finger, a touch, a tug, a smack or a caress. But when they begin to disentangle our speech and to frame theirs, we supplement the shorthand and symbol of gesture by words, and as the trickle of questions grows into a mighty torrent, we find ourselves delving ever deeper into the intricacies of language to supply their desire for knowledge.

The endless number of questions children ask are of two kinds. By far the greater number demand a large amount of patience and a large amount of knowledge. But fortunately as far as these factors are concerned, if we run out of either there are other people to whom we can refer them—Daddy or Grandpa, teacher or librarian, and other sources of information—the dictionary, the encyclopædia, the museum.

But a much smaller number of questions require more than mere patience and knowledge, and cannot

be handed to a substitute for reply. These are the questions which, revolving round the great mysteries of life, its beginning and end, God and religion, morals and social custom and family relationships, strike down into the depths of our being. These questions are difficult to answer not only because we have no certain knowledge to pass on about some of them, but only opinion, and still more because they are highly charged with emotion. Questions such as: 'Why don't you like Grandma? . . . Why are you a Miss and all the other mummies are Mrs.? . . . Why don't *you* say your prayers?' can send us into a flurry that precludes the calm and detached answer.

But because these very questions will continue to trouble our children no less than they trouble us if we leave them unanswered, we must consider well beforehand how we can deal with them when they arise. It is possible that in doing so, we may discover general principles underlying the whole matter however diverse the questions themselves may be. *What* each parent tells his child about these subjects many of which are closely bound up with the individual's religious and philosophic beliefs is of course for him alone to decide. *How* he does it may perhaps be usefully indicated.

It is perhaps worth noting to begin with, that a few years ago, 'answering children's questions' would have been taken to mean those about one subject—namely, sex. But in fact, we are beginning to realize that children are not generally bothered about this topic to the extent that we have believed—especially if their early questionings have been satisfied. Or rather, they are equally perplexed by vast matters which are not so easily answered. The 'facts of life' are *facts* at least, and a parent who keeps silent about these, does so for the

most part because of his unwillingness to talk, not usually because of his inability to do so. Many parents are far more concerned with how to satisfy their curiosity about the end of life for example, or how to deal with embarrassing inquiries into family dissensions.

The first principle that should guide us surely, when our children ask any question is that which our teachers tried to impress on us at school before an examination, and which we forget often now as then. It is, to answer the question that is asked—not what we think the questioner would like to know. If we keep this firmly in mind, matters will become at once enormously simplified. Four Years asks one day quite suddenly: 'Mummy, where do babies come from?', and at the answer, 'Out of their mummies' tummies,' he bursts into laughter. 'They crawl out of their mummies' mouthies,' he says. His mother, rather insulted, rejoins quickly, 'Oh no, they don't.' Whereupon he replies, 'Well, I'm going to play trains.' He could not indicate more clearly that he is tired of the subject. He is not interested in how babies came to be inside the mother, or how they will emerge. Only as his reach of mind increases, will he inquire further. To surfeit him with facts that he cannot understand, is to bore and confuse him.

This first point leads us to a second which we should do well to remember when our children dismay us with their inquiry. It is, if a child is old enough to ask a question, he is old enough to have it answered. The mere fact that the problem has presented itself to his mind and that he has been able to voice it, is proof enough that he recognizes it as a problem worth solving. A week before the question is posed, perhaps even a day or an hour, there is no problem. Babies exist. What is there to wonder about in that? But one step more, and

the statement is re-cast as a question: How do babies come to exist?

When therefore a question is asked, and whatever that question may be, our course is plain. We must try to find an answer if we are not to give our children unmistakable proof of our inadequacy, and what is more important to him, our lack of understanding of his needs. To reply: 'Oh, you won't understand . . . I'll tell you when you're older . . . You don't need to bother about that yet' or to foist him off with some ludicrous fiction he senses is not the truth, is to forfeit our privilege as guide. In addition, he will be irritated because we are denying his development, and he will persist in his inquiry either from us or from someone else, until a firm prohibition silences him outwardly. Even then as we know from our own history perhaps, he will not give up the search, but will tap every possible source of information, or circle round and round the subject, firing off one seemingly irrelevant question after another. It is not generally recognized that persistent and apparently aimless questions are often the child's substitutes for the real questions he would like to ask.

If we then let the child lead us, we shall find that answers to tremendous questions can be given by small degrees, even as we, in a lifetime come to our final—or near-final—conclusions about them. We shall not wait till our boy is fourteen before revealing to him the facts of life in a solemn hour, so that, as one writer put it, he could not look a primrose in the face thereafter without blushing! Similarly, the basic fact that death comes to every living thing sooner or later can be built up from earliest years. The faded flowers that are tossed away, the fly on the window sill, the cat thrown into the gutter

in the early morning, or the bird on the lawn—and even nearer the child, the goldfish that floats inertly one morning in the tank, the puppy that no longer frisks to meet him—all these teach the child the meaning of mortality. We do not need to ask our children to contemplate these evidences of death, but if they do come their way, we should not shrink from describing these things as 'dead' any more than that they are asleep or ill.

The same of course, holds good for information about family relationships of a difficult nature. The child who is adopted, fostered, or illegitimate, or whose parents are divorced, will be better able to accept the situation if he is made aware of it gradually than if it is delivered as a bombshell when he is least expecting it. If he has grown up understanding that he hasn't a daddy, or that he lives with Mummy and visits Daddy occasionally, or that his parents chose him specially out of many other children because they wanted a little boy so badly, or that he will stay with 'Auntie' till Mummy can have him with her, he at least knows where he stands. He may show plainly that he wants some of these circumstances to be altered, but he will, if he is treated sympathetically be able to adjust to the situation. 'Even if you and Daddy don't love each other, I can still love you both, can't I? . . . One day soon you'll get a job where you can have me won't you? . . . Perhaps one day I'll have a daddy like the others. . . .'

Such a child is not only more able to endure what can't be cured and therefore will be relatively at peace, but also he is no longer at the mercy of the chance acquaintance whose sudden revelation that he is not really Mummy's little boy at all, may stun him with a lifelong blow. Incidentally, it is remarkable with what

respect children will treat these confidences. 'I can tell you this because you are my little boy, but it is our story,' will often ensure his reticence about them to others, if such is our wish.

This policy will of course, necessitate telling the truth if only because this is the one way in which we can build up a coherent story. And we may find to our dismay, once we have made this decision, that we have never thought much about the matters which intrigue our children, often because they are subjects which are unpleasant or painful to us. So our child's question, 'What happens when we die?' may suddenly reveal to us a wild confusion of ideas in which fragmentary childhood conceptions of a future life—harps and angels with wings on clouds—mingle with a maturer but less easily described belief in a spiritual existence.

We may indeed find, that we have to think through many of these great imponderables for the first time in our lives if we are to prove ourselves trustworthy guides for our children. We owe it to them, if we have not done it for ourselves, to 'see life steadily, and see it whole'. Otherwise we shall reveal ourselves as the blind leading the blind. We shall create doubts instead of solving them, like the headmistress of a modern infants' school who urged the children to pray for a sick playmate because, 'God always answers prayers'. When she was forced to tell them a few days later that the child had died, she sent home one little boy at least, perplexed and furious and in tears, 'Because, Mummy, I did pray so hard.'

But even a clear understanding of our beliefs does not make all plain sailing, and we must unfold the coherent story according to the needs and circumstances of the individual child. Our revelation of death for example,

will be different if the child has had sudden experience of it than if he only knows of it from hearsay. With the little child, our consolation will naturally take the form of physical care. With older children we shall be ready to talk back and as fully as they want, until the ten-year-old can say and mean while gulping down a sob, 'I'm glad he didn't have to go on living, Mummy, if he had to be in pain all the time.'

Adolescents will appreciate a man-to-man sharing of their thoughts, to know that the greatest minds have thought deeply about the same questions that are puzzling them. Some will be able to rest content in the answer which satisfies so many adults: 'We have but faith: we cannot know,' and they will understand the true immortality of the great people of the past, and of parents, whose influence is more powerful to-day than it was in life. They will welcome the thought of many that as in Nature decay is the preliminary to new life, so God will not allow anything that he has created to be utterly destroyed.

Similarly a child who has been brought into contact with the so-called 'seamy' side of life will be able to enter into maturer discussion. He will agree that his mother cannot invite her divorced husband to come for an indefinite holiday to their home, however much the child himself would like it.

Again, the temperament of the child, his generally anxious nature for example, will warn us to soft-pedal harsh facts, or to present him with the full story if he seems able to take it. And of course, his level of intelligence will help us to decide how much he may usefully be told. Just as the child's questions will lead us into the heart of his problem if we have courage to follow them, so will they take us into the heart of the

child himself and into his thinking and fantasies and they will show us where and how to make darkness light.

The individual differences in the young listener remind us of another point, which is that we should expect and allow the child to react with appropriate emotion. 'We don't want to think about that any more. . . . Let's talk about something nice. . . . He was a horrible man—don't worry about him. . . . Now come along, be brave, dry those tears . . .', all these dismissive attitudes are a great mistake. Children do want to talk and think and worry about things which are fearful or strange or horrible, simply because they are disturbing. Tales of being buried alive, phrases like, 'though worms devour this body', stories of ghosts, fears of bereavements to come—all these must be exorcized and laid to rest by talking them out with a friendly adult.

We may find, especially in the case of younger children, that repeated explanation of the same thing in different words may be necessary. This is not an expression of morbid interest on the part of the child. He needs to hear these truths again and again, till they become part of his knowledge and belief. Otherwise they will remain as doubts and fears and assume gigantic proportions because they have never been resolved. Death, sex, the scoundrelly father, the no-good mother—these become ghouls haunting the child through life, crippling his wholesome development.

We should never be afraid of letting our children express their grief of horror, and hurry it out of sight. Many adults are reassured when a child 'never says a word' about some dreadful experience. They interpret this as a proof that the child has forgotten the matter. In fact it is ever present, numbing his ability to think

and talk about other things. He is afraid of it and recognizes all too well the unwillingness of the adult to help him combat it. It is far better, when the child feels the need, to recall without any maudlin sentiment the loved person, and to talk of what was happy and pleasant in his life and death, to purge frightening experience in the fire of reason and pour on the balm of consolation.

Against all these considerations which pile up into one plea for full and frank answering of our children's questions, may be set the sincere contention: 'But how can we answer these difficult matters in simple enough language?' Even if we believe a child is emotionally ready to know the answer to a question like, 'What is God like?', we may feel that he cannot grasp it intellectually.

This is where our first two premises, answering what is asked and answering step by step will safeguard us. If we follow these faithfully, we shall find the child himself will lead us into these complexities. Children, as the ancient scriptures so often remind us, have sometimes a grasp of essentials that we have lost. The fact that adults so often express surprise and admiration at children's questions, 'fancy him asking that!' shows what little confidence they have in a child's understanding.

Looking at life simply, they are blind to bewildering detail. 'If you had to bring me up by yourself,' said an illegitimate boy when his mother told him of his origin, 'you must have had to work very hard. I love you more than ever.' Freer of doubts than are many adults, they will often accept tribulation with more fortitude than we do. 'If you and daddy were to go away, I expect the nurses would look after me like they do after those

little babies,' says Four Years, seeing a picture of orphanage children in the newspaper. 'I daresay one of your aunties would look after you,' says Mother. 'Yes, but if they wouldn't, I expect the nurses would . . .'

And they are, as most mothers realize with a shock, far from being earthbound. 'How calm!' said an eight-year-old on his first view of a mountain lake, '—just like God.' So the distinction between the material and spiritual is not as difficult for the child to make as some would have us believe. He knows that his mind is free of his body—that he can think about Mummy when he is at school, and that she can think about him and love him just the same while he is there. In fact, in this way, he is still at home with her. So he may feel perfectly confident of God's care for him and grow up with an idea of spiritual reality.

There is one last point and perhaps the most important. However deep and sincere our personal views, we may justly hesitate before imparting them dogmatically. We may feel that in doing so we shall stunt our child's free growth, and also that through us, another parent with different beliefs may be affronted. 'My mum says that's all rot. . . . She says . . .'

may give us a gratifying sense of our boy's loyalty. It may greatly upset our equally sincere neighbour whose child is thus crudely presented with another philosophy. To pass on to our children the sincerity of our convictions, and to show them why we have come to believe thus and why we hold this belief dearer than any other, is one thing. To give him to understand it cancels out every other, and that any retraction from it on his part would be unforgivable, this is quite another matter, and one which most of us will feel we are not called upon to make. Rudy keeps Passover and John keeps Christmas. Ann

never eats bacon, and Jane won't eat meat on Friday. Jim is fair, and Jack has blue eyes and Sam has a dark skin. Tom's father is a bookmaker and Dick's a professor, and Harry's a grocer.

This is life, its movement and flow, its change and contrast, its unexpectedness and its variety. We must do more than give our children the stark unreality of a black-and-white world, the friends who are 'all right' for him to play with and the friends who are 'all wrong'. We must play fair with them, and not hand on as burdens to them the thought we have carried for twenty years—our disapproval of flighty Aunt May, and our rancour against brother Ned that has kept us estranged since we were children.

'Can I play with John's crib?' asks Rudy at Christmas time. 'Can I eat motza too?' asks John in Rudy's house during Passover. 'They burn lovely incense in her church . . . I wish I could always wear Wellingtons like Tom, even on dry days . . . I love Sam's woolly hair—I wish I were black.'

Children delight in life's kaleidoscope, in its ever-changing patterns as they delight in the everydayness of their home and lives. Against the backdrop of a home that never changes, where they know what to expect and what is expected of them, they revel in the ever-changing scenery of other homes, other views and other modes of thought. If we bind over their eyes the blinkers we have been accustomed to wear, they will never see the bright sparkle or the strange hues on each side of the road. We have robbed them of their due. If we have come to give our children life, let us give it them abundantly. Then we may be sure they will give back life in full measure, pressed down and running over.

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